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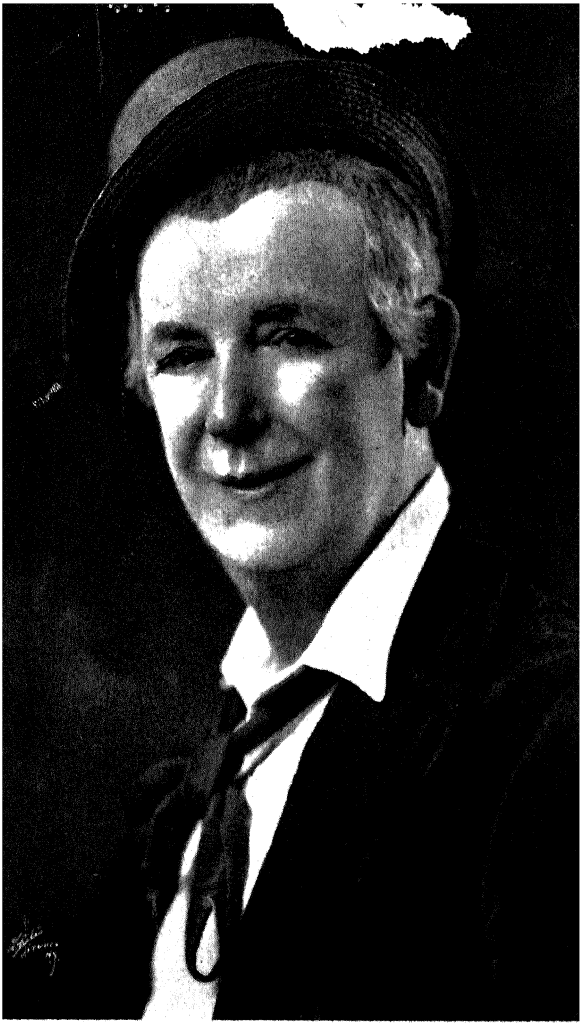
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CROWNING THROUGH LIFE



EDDIE FOY IN "THAT CASEY GIRL," HIS LAST PLAY

Clowning Through Life

BY

EDDIE FOY

AND

ALVIN F. HARLOW



ILLUSTRATED

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

681 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

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CLOWNING THROUGH LIFE

CLOWNING THROUGH LIFE

I

THERE was a tradition in our family that I could dance on the day I was born. Perhaps someone observed that even the infantile kicking I did during those first few hours was done in rhythm. And perhaps my voice was no less melodious that day than it was in later years when I was drawing a large salary for doing alleged singing with it. However that may be, I can testify from first-hand knowledge that I was singing and dancing very early in life.

Persons who have marveled for years at my finely attuned artistic temperament will understand it all when they learn that I was born in Greenwich Village. Yes, sir, at number 23 Eighth Avenue, New York City, just above Abingdon Square, where lived the beautiful Polly Perkins of the old song which probably few people today have ever heard. There I was born on March 9th, 1856. How long, long ago that seems! Almost as if it had been in another world! When I

sometimes start reminiscing down at the Lambs' Club, I can tell by the way some of the youngsters around there look at me that I seem like a tercentenarian to them. But when I go out in the billiard room and now and then beat fellows forty or fifty years younger than myself at either bank-shot or three cushions, I don't seem so ancient. At such times I tell them sagely that a man is only as old as he thinks he is.

My father, Richard Fitzgerald, ran a tailor shop. It occupied the front room of a two-story building, and we lived very comfortably in the other rooms above and back of the shop. Father and Mother had been married over in old Limerick a few years before and had crossed the ocean along with the hordes of Irish, English, and German immigrants who came to this country by the hundred thousand in those three or four decades just before the Civil War. Like Saint Patrick, we came of 'dacent people.' My mother's brother was a missionary in some of the Pacific islands, and a very influential one, I'm told. I was brought up in strict piety, and though some folks may not believe it, the effects thereof never quite departed from me.

There is almost nothing in New York now to remind me of what it was when I was a small boy; the old City Hall, of course, nearly twice my age,

but even there, the surroundings are so changed that it doesn't look the same. And by the way, New York was no mean city when I was born, either—nearly 750,000 population, and still it didn't cover Manhattan Island. And you could still see an occasional pig or goat or flock of chickens at large on the street in Greenwich Village or Chelsea.

The Tweed Ring was weaving its net about the city in my infancy. Bill Tweed was one of the commissioners who finished the Ludlow Street Jail the year I was born—but not in anticipation of my coming, as I can hear someone suggesting immediately. On the contrary, Bill himself had the misfortune to die in a cell there some twenty years later. The East Side was a bit wild and woolly in those days, but no worse than it is now. The Dead Rabbits and the Bowery Boys spent most of their energy in fighting each other; today the slums harbor crooks and gunmen who are more dangerous enemies to society than any of sixty or seventy years ago. The East Side bullies of the Civil War period usually stayed on their own reservation, though once they took possession of the City Hall and held it for an hour. That, however, was just by way of pulling off a daring stunt. Mayor Fernando Wood was their friend, anyhow.

The up- and down-town busses were running

long before I was born, and street car lines—the franchises for which were invariably secured by bribery—were becoming numerous in the city. You could go away up to Yorkville and Jones's Woods and even to Manhattanville and Harlem on them. The first Atlantic cable was laid when I was two years old; it broke immediately, and another one was not completed for ten years.

It was a different America then from what it is now. Life was simpler, and although there was much rottenness in a few of the larger city governments and a certain amount of crime everywhere, yet I do not believe that we were on the whole as lawless a people as we are today. And in spite of the numberless conveniences and amusements devised for us today, I do not think we are any happier. The rich child, who has all the toys that the market affords, often isn't as happy, in fact, is seldom as happy as the poor country boy who hasn't anything to play with save what he makes himself.

That was an age of gorgeous clothing and lots of it. The single outfit in which a woman went on street then would clothe about six women today. And the hoopskirts! One of the amazements of my childhood was the vast difference in my mother's appearance when she was at home doing her housework and when she was all dressed up to

go to church—which we attended regularly. At such times she was a bit awe-inspiring to me; and I am sure that Sunday dress and those hoops made her feel the solemnity of the occasion more keenly. A woman who appeared in public without hoops looked like a collapsed umbrella, and was usually set down as belonging to the "lower clahses."

The men wore flowing trousers with plaids sometimes eight inches across, and plenty of hair and whiskers. Father—like my Mother—was a sort of plain person on working days, but on Sundays and festive occasions he felt it necessary to advertise his business by displaying some of the latest ideas in men's snappy clothes. They put bear grease and pomatum on their hair then, so that thick "tidies" had to be hung on chair backs to keep them from ruining the upholstery. Ten or twenty years ago we laughed at the idea of men gumming up their hair that way; and here the cycle has been completed once more, and boys and young men are greasing and pasting their hair until some of them look positively rancid to me.

There are so many things that stand out in my memory as making the old New York different from the new—the public wells, for example. Of course the city had the Croton water supply long before I was born—with a reservoir where the Public Library stands now; but all through my boyhood

and for years afterward those town pumps were scattered about over lower Manhattan, and came in mighty handy for the small boy who wanted a drink every half hour, as small boys always do. The wells were usually along the curb, at street corners or in the middle of blocks; and if you could induce someone to work the long wooden handle for a moment or two, you just put your mouth to the wooden spout and got a drink and a face-wash at the same time.

The old Astor House—the building still stood recently on Broadway between Barclay and Vesey, though I understand it's been torn down now—was the great hotel of the city in my early boyhood. I've hung about its entrance more than once, looking longingly in at the magnificence inside. It passed away as a hotel ages ago and was given over to stores; but only recently one of the old curved signs bearing the words, "Astor House," still hung over a side entrance of the building on Barclay Street.

Just across the street, at Broadway and Ann, P. T. Barnum was running his famous museum as far back as I can remember. Oh, how I longed to see the inside of it! But after I grew old enough to yearn for it, I never had the money. For I was left an orphan at a rather early age and had to help the rest of the family scratch for a living.

Of course I was too young to know what it was all about when the Civil War began. I have a dim recollection of being held up by Father or Mother at the curb to see long lines of soldiers marching down streets—probably Broadway and Fifth Avenue—with flags waving and bands playing and crowds cheering, and it all seemed very fine; but a little later, when Father himself decided to go to the front, the war took on a different aspect. He had a wife and four children (there were two sisters older than I and one younger) and might very well have been excused if he had stayed at home; but many other family men were volunteering, Father was intensely patriotic and had the Irishman's love of a fight—and so he went.

He left us somewhere about the first of the year 1862, and was in service only a few months. He was wounded in the shoulder in the fighting near Washington—I think it must have been the Second Battle of Bull Run, or Chantilly—and after several weeks in a hospital was invalided home. He had not been at home long when he decided one day to brighten up the front of his shop a bit. He took a pot of dark green paint out on the sidewalk and began painting the window-casings—but after he had finished the woodwork, he proceeded to paint the glass, too. Then Mother remembered noticing certain other peculiarities in his conduct

in the past few days. Doctors told us that the wound in his shoulder had affected his brain. He grew worse rapidly, and the time came when we were in terror for our lives. Then they took him away to the insane asylum on Blackwell's Island, and I never saw him again.

There wasn't even a ferry to the Island in those days. Officials, patients, everybody, had to be rowed across the East River—often rough it was, too—in skiffs. There was just a huddle of cheap wooden buildings on the Island, and like all other public works in New York City then, it was shot through and through with graft. Inmates were abused and neglected. Father had been there only a few months when he was wandering around the grounds one day unwatched, and simply walked off the rocks into the river and was drowned. My mental picture of him has grown rather dim in the more than sixty years that have passed since then, but I remember him as a rather good-looking man and a kindly father.

II

WE were having a hard time of it, of course, even before Father died. His months in the army on a thirteen-dollar salary had not improved our finances, and when he was taken away to the hospital we received no relief from the Government—nor did we after he died. Uncle Sam was too hard pressed in those days to think of pensions. Mother was compelled to work at whatever she could get—washing, sewing, nursing, what not. She was a smart, handsome woman of thirty-six, and I think could have married again if she liked, but she remained a widow until her death, nearly fifty years later.

It was soon after Father's death that there occurred one of the most vivid experiences of my boyhood. There was a great deal of disloyalty in New York, and it was known that some of the city officials shared in it to some extent. In fact, the Mayor, Fernando Wood, had suggested to the Common Council when the Civil War began in 1861 that New York secede from the Union and set up as a free city. He even thought of taking in Staten and Long Islands and calling the new State,

Tri-Insula. So when the Government decided on conscription in 1863, all the copperheads and slackers in the city began to talk of resisting it.

I knew nothing of all this at the time, of course, and in fact, for long afterwards didn't understand the meaning of the Draft Riots. But one hot, cloudy, muggy morning—it was Monday, the 13th of July, by the way—the Draft Boards opened their sittings, and then the trouble began. It started at a draft headquarters away up on Third Avenue in the forties somewhere, and we didn't hear much of it that first day, though there was some of the fiercest street fighting in history. Nearly the whole block where the Draft Board sat was burned; a colored orphan asylum was burned, stores were wrecked and looted and numerous people were killed and injured.

That was the first of four days of the most terrible warfare that a big modern city ever saw. By the second day outbreaks were occurring nearer to our neighborhood, though none on our own street. I think it was on the third day that the rioters took possession of Ninth Avenue for ten or fifteen blocks just above us, cut down telegraph poles and trees, and with these and wagons and buggies barricaded all the cross streets, just like the Paris revolutionists used to do. All street cars and busses stopped running on the second day. No milk could

be had, for the milkmen were afraid to come in from the country. A dock at Forty-second Street was burned, and most captains then moved their ships (many California clippers among them) out into the middle of the rivers and anchored them, for fear they would be destroyed. No men ever fought more bravely than the city police did, and though they were greatly outnumbered, they did wonderful work.

Mother, busy with her work here and there, forbade us to go out on the street. That might do for my sisters, but not for me. I was curious to see some of the trouble, but scared to death when any of it came near me. From a safe distance I watched several fights—heard the yelling and saw clubs swinging and bricks and stones flying; but as soon as any shooting began, I ducked around a corner. I had no love for a gun, haven't yet, and never toted one in my life.

Much of the fury of the mob was directed against Negroes. Scores of them were killed and their property destroyed. Not so very far from us, around Sullivan, Thompson, Grand and Broome Streets, there was a large colored settlement. That was there in later years M. Quad's "Thompson Street Poker Club" was supposed to be located. Well, the Negroes in that district heard that they were going to be attacked, and they prepared to

defend themselves on the roofs of their homes, laying in a big stock of stones and tearing down their chimneys to get bricks to throw at the mob. But for various reasons those blocks were never attacked.

The rioters did kill some colored people in our vicinity, however. One day there was a tremendous uproar a few blocks below our house, and we heard that a man had been hanged. When the row had died down a bit, I ran down there with some other small boys and there, dangling high in air from a telegraph pole, was the body of a Negro—his clothing much torn and dusty, indicating how he had been maltreated before they hung him. The sight almost turned me sick, and yet it had a terrible fascination for me. I loitered about, staring at it, no doubt with popping eyes; went away and came back again and again. I was there when the police cut the body down—saw it lying on the pavement with the dark face distorted and swollen from the choking and the July heat. Then a sudden revulsion overcame me and I ran home at top speed, scared and breathless.

When the riots subsided on the evening of the fourth day, more than a thousand people had been killed and millions of dollars' worth of property destroyed.

My younger sister died soon after Father left

us; there seemed no end to our troubles in those days. Not only were we saddened by our bereavements, but the problem of paying doctor's bills and funeral expenses, and getting our living, too, was a serious one. My two older sisters and I did what we could to help. A friend of the family made for me a little box and fastened a strap to it and a cleat as a rest for shoe heels, and I started out as a bootblack. My range was all over lower Manhattan and as far north as Twenty-third Street. For a while I would work in one district, then wander to another. I was always restless and longing for change. I may have had the honor of polishing Boss Tweed's boots in those days; there's no telling. I knew none of the big men of the city.

But all the time I was practicing dancing, singing, grimacing and a little childish acrobatic work. Whenever I saw a man doing a dance on the street, in a saloon, anywhere, whether it was Negro, Irish, Spanish or Indian, I watched him closely and practiced the step afterward. I almost never had a chance to see even the smallest, crudest sort of a show; but I cherished the hope of some day seeing one, and what was still wilder, of being a part of one! I think I was born with the desire to be an actor.

The saddest day of my life was that occasion while my father was in the insane hospital, when

my mother's sailor brother came to town, and, thinking to give the family a bit of diversion, invited us to accompany him to a circus which was holding forth up at Jones's Woods. Unfortunately, I was in disgrace at the moment. I had broken some law or other, discipline was severe in those days, and as a punishment I was condemned to stay at home. I fancy the circus was only a little one-gallus affair, but it would have been the finest one I had ever seen, and to me at that moment it was the most important thing on earth. I can't believe that Mother would have punished me so if she had realized what it meant to me. No other anguish in all my life has ever been quite so keen as that. I can feel the sting of it yet. I was fit for murder or suicide that day, and might have committed one or the other or both if I had thought of it.

There was a saloon on Catherine Street, on the lower East Side, whose proprietor, a good-natured old Irishman, saw me dancing on the sidewalk one day and invited me in to entertain his patrons, who tossed me a few coins. I thus attracted the attention of a wandering fiddler named Huggins, who suggested that I throw in with him and earn a great deal of money by doing my song and dance stuff to his music. Did I accept? I couldn't do it quick enough! I threw away my blacking kit, and at the age of eight became an entertainer.

Huggins was a fat, lazy fellow with a good musical ear and a clever knack with a violin. I think he had a fancy for the life of a vagabond. He and I ranged all over New York, with occasional visits to Brooklyn and Jersey City, doing our turn in saloons wherever they would permit us to do so, and sometimes in the streets if we could get a crowd together. My leading song and for a long time my only one was supposed to be that of a little Negro boy, though I didn't put on blackface makeup to do it. It started thus:

I'm happy little Ned;
I earn my daily bread
By doing chores for white folks 'round this town.
I was never known to shirk
From any kind of work,
At blacking boots there's none can take me down.

I would follow it up with my two or three dances. Sometimes we gathered quite a shower of coin, sometimes little. I never questioned Huggins's system of dividing the profits with me. As I remember it, I made but little more at this busking, as it was called then, than I did at boot-polishing; but no matter—I was happy in it. I was an actor at last; and that was a far more dignified profession than shining shoes—so far above it that it was not to be mentioned in the same breath.

III

My career as a busker with my friend Huggins was cut short after I'd been at it about a year. One of my mother's brothers who lived in Chicago had been urging her to come to that city, which was growing like magic, and where he thought it would be easier for all of us to make a living. He sent us railway tickets, and early in 1865 when the Civil War was drawing to a close, I embarked with my mother and sisters on one of my life's great adventures—my first railroad journey. The track was rough and the seats were hard and cane-upholstered, but it was all perfect to me; and after staring eagerly through the windows all day, I slept on one of those cane seats at night as if it had been eider-down.

It took the better part of three days to go from New York to Chicago. Aside from the fact that Mother lost all our tickets en route, nothing unusual happened on the journey. I don't remember how she got out of the scrape, but I know we weren't put off the train, and all arrived in Chicago, safe and sound.

We hadn't been in Chicago long when the war

ended, and a few days later President Lincoln was assassinated. Then came that long, strange railroad funeral journey, when they took his body to Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Buffalo, Cleveland, Chicago and a few other places en route, stopping almost everywhere to let the people see him in his coffin. When he lay in state in the Court House in Chicago we—my uncle's family and ours—were among the vast crowd that filed by his bier; most of the population of the city, it seemed, and many from outside. We had to stand in line a long time and I grew very tired and impatient; but finally we got in. When we reached the coffin, my uncle lifted me slightly so that I could look in and see his face, by then sallow and shrunken. I was tremendously impressed, and although I was only nine, the memory has remained a vivid one to this day.

Things didn't seem to break much better for us in Chicago than in New York. Mother was able to get work part of the time, but we three kids had to work hard, too. My eldest sister, Catherine, was now approaching womanhood. I found no opportunity to do any song and dance work "professionally" and so, much to my disgust, I was compelled to go back to shoe-shining again.

I almost never had any opportunity to go to school in my boyhood. Once I went a few months

to a night school when I was about twelve; I didn't know then and I don't know now whether it was operated by the city or not. It was there that I met Ben Collins, who also had theatrical ambitions, and of whom I saw a great deal during the next fifteen or twenty years. His real name was Ben Condon. Ben was an eccentric genius a little older than I was, and had he lived longer and been able to let liquor alone, he might have left his mark rather high on Fame's tablet.

My teacher at the night school was a beautiful and gracious lady who completely won my heart. It's hard for a boy to guess at adult ages; she might have been anywhere from twenty-five to thirty-five. But how I adored her! I did not tell her how poor I was nor that I was a bootblack. But I was only one among many boys, and probably she gave me and my occupation very little thought, anyhow. One day I was down on my knees, polishing a man's shoes on State Street when I happened to look up and there was my teacher just passing. I looked down again quickly, but she had recognized me and gave me a nod and smile as she went by. I felt my face burning with mortification. The incident made me unhappy for the rest of the day. It seemed to me that I could not bear to face her again after she had seen me at so humiliating a task—and so I never went back to the school. It

was a sad ordeal to give up sitting at the feet of my Goddess of Wisdom, but I never saw her again.

I tried hard to find some other means of livelihood. It did not seem that I was ever going to reach the stage. Here I was, twelve years old and not started yet! I must earn a great deal of money, so that I could make a more impressive appearance. I remember one Saturday morning when there had been a heavy snowfall, I started out early with a shovel borrowed (without his knowledge) from a janitor friend, and toiled for hours, clearing sidewalks, until I was worn to a frazzle. When I quit, I had earned a dollar and a half. I returned the shovel in the same quiet way I had gotten it, and planned to invest my capital in fifty Sunday newspapers—*Times* and *Tribune.* They would cost me three cents apiece and would sell for five, thus adding another dollar to my fortune.

I was down at the newspaper office before daybreak next morning. There was always a small-sized riot around the counters where the boys got their papers. I had worked my way up to the front of the press and was yelling for my papers, holding up my money to attract the man's attention when a larger boy snatched the money out of my hand and turned to make away with it. Another boy of his age cried out, "Whaddya mean, Slim? Give de kid back his money!" Slim didn't seem inclined to



EDDIE FOY AT THE AGE OF 13

do so, and the other fellow jumped him. For three or four minutes the uproar was multiplied ten times. Then newspaper employes succeeded in separating a few of the battlers, and Slim was compelled to disgorge my money. I never forgot that favor nor the champion who aided me.

But frequently when I went into a speculation like this, I didn't succeed in selling all my papers; and then it cost so much live! Sometimes when my mother was away from home nursing, I lived at the Newsboys' Home, where they gave us lodging and two meals for twenty-five cents a day. There was a sort of assembly room at the Home with a rostrum at one end, and there the boys sometimes put on little shows for their own amusement, in which of course I eagerly took part. I had no costume, and the only way I could achieve a comic effect was by turning my coat wrongside out. But I made quite a hit with my acrobatic dancing. I had learned to turn a pretty creditable handspring when I was only ten, and later on I added cartwheels and other stunts which the boys thought were great.

I seldom saw a real theatrical performance, even of the cheapest, but I heard parts of a great many—mostly minstrels, musical and vaudeville shows—while standing in alleys where the sound came through the windows, or lurking outside

those concert halls or wine rooms which put on what we would call cabaret performances now—though that word hadn't been heard of then.

One of my favorite listening posts was in the alley alongside the theatre on Dearborn Street where Emerson and Manning's Minstrels held sway the year round. Billy Emerson was one of the great blackface singers and comedians of the Nineteenth Century, and his partner, Billy Manning, was not far behind him. The Negro minstrel show was far and away the most popular of all amusements for the masses, and even the elite patronized those of the better type and laughed as uproariously as anybody.

There one might find some of the best tenor, baritone and bass voices in the country. There was comparatively little opera then, either of the grand or lighter variety, and no musical comedy as we know it now. Opera singing was apt to be a rather precarious means of livelihood; and many of our best male singers therefore stuck to minstrelsy, which paid well and offered more regular work. For several years before the big fire Emerson and Manning's theatre never closed. They merely changed the show a bit every month or so. They gave a show which was liked by everybody in Chicago, from society folk on down, and winter and summer, from New Year to New Year, they

packed 'em in. I once had the pleasure of actually seeing their performance from a seat in the gallery, and it was one of the red-letter evenings of my boyhood.

IV

I WAS fifteen when Chicago's great calamity occurred. I seem to have been destined from the beginning to be mixed up in spectacular events and disasters. That was a strange and terrible autumn that we had in Chicago in 1871. We were all at home at the time. My eldest sister Catherine had been married, but her husband had died shortly afterwards, leaving her with a baby which was about eighteen months old at the time of the fire. Chicago was a wooden city then. I suppose that more than 99 percent of the residences were of wood, and a goodly part of the business buildings and factories. The bridges across the river were all of wood, and so were nearly all of the sidewalks. Even miles and miles of the streets had what was called "Nicholson" or wooden block pavement, though many other miles had no pavement at all.

For nearly fifteen weeks we hadn't had enough rain to lay the dust. The sprinkling wagons did their best, but we were choking with dust and gasping from heat from late June until October. The sun blazed and the hot winds blew off the

prairies until the whole city was as dry and inflammable as dry grass.

We were living on Madison Street then, opposite Franklin, and just east of the south branch of the river. To those who are not familiar with Chicago, I will explain that the North and South branches of the Chicago River approach each other, running south and north almost parallel to the lake shore, unite scarcely a mile from the beach, and thence the main river runs directly eastward to the lake. The two branches thus cut off the West Side from the main part of the city and from what are known as the North Side and South Side.

On Saturday evening, October 7th, there was a big fire along the west bank of the southern branch, just a few blocks below us. It burned over about six blocks of lumber yards, sawmills and other small factories and dwellings lying between Clinton Street and the river, and from Van Buren Street north to Adams, which was only about two blocks south of us, though across the stream. We watched it from the Madison Street bridge and it made such a big blaze that we grew a little uneasy even then, but the firemen finally quelled it. Had the wind been blowing as strong as it was on the following evening, the great disaster might have happened then and there.

The next evening—Sunday—a high wind was

blowing, a regular gale, from the southwest. I turned in between nine and ten o'clock and was sound asleep immediately. Just about that time the bells were ringing for a fire down at De Koven and Jefferson Streets—west of the river again and still farther south than the blaze of the night before. That was a slum district down there, of the kind that used to be seen in America before our cities became so crowded—all wooden shacks (mostly one-story) jammed closely together, the dwellings rubbing elbows with stables, pig sties and hen-houses. The streets were unpaved and full of mud-holes. The inhabitants were mostly recent immigrants, among them many Czechs and Slovaks, who were then rather a novelty in America. Goats, pigs, and chickens roamed at large, and you could even see a flock of geese waddling down the street now and then or wading in a stagnant puddle, as if it had been a country lane.

There's no certainty as to how the fire began. It is said to have started in a stable, but whether Mrs. O'Leary's (or Scully's or Kelly's—various names were used) cow was to blame is, I think, an open question. Anyhow, I slept peacefully all through the early part of it. But about midnight I was awakened by my Mother shaking me vigorously. She had to fairly haul me out of bed, for a fifteen-year-old boy in the middle of his night's

sleep is very nearly a dead one. But when she got it through my head that the fire was coming and I saw the red glow through the windows, I was on my feet in a hurry.

Mother and the girls had known before ten o'clock by the glare in the sky that a big fire was raging south of us; but it was on the other side of the river, and though the wind was bringing it northward, everybody thought—or at least, hoped—that the burned district of the night before would stop it. Still, Mother was a little uneasy, as the fire didn't seem to grow less but rather increased; and she stayed up, watching it. Along towards midnight she learned that it had leaped across the river near Polk Street to a lumber yard on the east bank; and now it was rushing up our side of the stream before that terrible gale, spreading not only northward but eastward towards the lake. The firemen were powerless.

Wagons and drays were already passing northward and westward, moving household goods and valuables from the vicinity of the fire. Mother was a strong-willed woman and she fought stubbornly against the suggestion that our own home might be burned. Nevertheless, she was negotiating with an old drayman who lived near us for the removal of our goods, if it became necessary. Little did she think how soon it would become necessary. Other

people in the neighborhood were becoming badly frightened and were moving out.

We debated what to do and finally Mother said to me, "Eddie, you take Bernard (the baby) and go up to Mr. Jackson's till the fire's over. If our own house don't burn, come back here in the morning. If it does, we'll see you at Mr. Jackson's."

The Jacksons were friends of ours who lived at the corner of Lake and Dearborn Streets, on the north edge of the business section and just south of the main Chicago River. Mother sent me up there because she thought that place would be perfectly safe; she thought she was providing for the security of the most valuable thing in the household—the baby. To reach the Jacksons' place the fire would have to burn through the main business portion of the city, and it never occurred to her or to anyone else that that sort of thing could possibly happen. The firemen would undoubtedly find some way to stop it—and besides, most of the big downtown buildings were of brick and stone and iron, many of them claimed to be absolutely fireproof. They would doubtless stop the fire dead in its tracks; but they didn't! Until that night, no one in America had had any conception of what a fire could do if given such ideal conditions as prevailed in Chicago.

Catherine clung to the baby a bit anxiously as

she kissed it good-bye, but neither she nor Mother were seriously worried over the separation. They had full confidence in me, because I had a knack for taking care of myself and had had a lot of experience at it. Had they had any conception of what the history of that night would be, they never would have let me go.

It was three blocks north and four east to Lake and Dearborn. I trudged northward on Franklin Street, carrying the baby and turning at every three or four steps to look back at the red sky. Presently I could see the tips of the flames leaping into the air. The farther I went, the more badly I was scared. I had not yet reached Lake Street when I realized that the fire was coming faster than any of us had suspected. Why, it looked as if it might be almost to our house already. No such area of city, I believe, was ever burned over so quickly. It overwhelmed fire companies, destroyed their apparatus, perhaps killed some of their men and swept on, leaving the survivors behind. The flame ran along the plank sidewalks as if through prairie grass. In places even the wooden block pavement was burned.

When I turned east on Lake and reached Wells Street, there were dozens of vehicles hurrying north towards the bridge across the main river, loaded with everything imaginable, but mostly

furniture, bedding and goods which merchants were trying to save from their stores. As I crossed Wells and La Salle Streets, I could look southward and see the fire coming—so near that I thought it must be among the big downtown buildings already. The tumult around me was growing worse at every step. Some people along Lake Street were already moving their furniture out of their houses, and men were hurrying about, looking for wagons. When I reached the Jacksons' home, they were moving out, too.

"My God!" cried Mr. Jackson. "What are you doing here with that baby? Get across the river or down to the lake front, quick! We're going to move across the river."

He and his family were so absorbed in their own troubles that they had no time to think of me. I stood about for several minutes, probably the worst scared and puzzled fifteen-year-old boy on record. I hated to separate myself from friends—that is, from people who had always been friendly before; but it was evident that they felt they couldn't be bothered with me. The danger was increasing at every moment. The flames, blown horizontally by the wind, reached forward and with the lapse of only a few moments caught building after building in their path. Meanwhile sparks and bits of flaming wood were carried far ahead by the wind and

started new fires. Several square miles of Chicago were burning simultaneously that night.

I might have begged to be allowed to take the baby across the river on the Jacksons' load of household goods; but though they were stacking their furniture on the sidewalk, Jackson had not yet found a wagon, and there was no certainty that he would find one. It was pretty clear that if the baby was saved, I would have to do it unassisted. So I finally turned away and hurried east on Lake Street, thinking to cross the river either at the State or Rush Street bridge, or else to reach the lake shore. But at State Street the turmoil was terrible. The river bridges were narrow—not half the width of the streets—and this one had gotten jammed with a tangle of wagons and drays, with people on foot swarming and struggling around them, cursing, screaming, crying and fighting. I dared not venture into that mob with the baby—so I kept on eastward. I had now decided to go to the lake.

Every street that I crossed was so thronged with vehicles—and all lashing ahead at a trot or a gallop, the drivers utterly reckless of people on foot—that I risked both our lives at every crossing. Men with pocketbooks or bunches of money in their hands were begging for wagons—offering twenty-five, fifty, a hundred dollars a load to any

one who would haul it. Many wagoners were demanding outrageous prices; some desperate people were seizing vehicles by force.

The sidewalks were becoming almost as dangerous as the streets. People crazed by fear, excitement, or liquor ran wildly to and fro, some staggering under loads of plunder or their own worldly goods. Trying to shield the baby, I was knocked this way and that, and once went down to my knees, but got up again quickly. Looters were smashing the doors and windows of stores and making away with whatever they could carry. Others had scuttled the saloons and were uproariously drunk. Roughs and lewd women yelled, howled, cursed, laughed idiotically, danced and sometimes fell down helpless in the streets, to be run over or lie there until the fire overtook them.

The destroyer was now so close that I fancied I could hear its roar above all of the other din. Its glare was already lighting up the riverside streets. Sparks and burning embers were flying across the heavens and falling in showers around us; I was continually afraid some of them would set the baby's clothes afire or burn his face. I pulled a flap of his cloak well up over his head to protect him. The poor kid was squalling at the top of his voice from terror—it was seldom that I could hear him in the uproar around me, but I knew he was crying

because his mouth was wide open and his eyes shut. He was getting terribly heavy, too, but thank goodness, I was nearing Michigan Avenue and the lake front. My own home must be gone by now, I thought. What had become of my mother and sisters? And if they were still alive, what would they think had become of Bernard and me? How would we ever find each other again?

As I reached Michigan Avenue I saw—it may seem incredible, but it's true—great sections of shingles and weatherboarding from the roofs and sides of houses, all ablaze, flying through the air above me in the gale. A wagonload of household goods passed in full gallop towards the Rush Street bridge, the driver lashing his horses, all unaware that his load, fired by a spark, was blazing merrily behind him. Watching my chance, I dived across the Avenue with a group of grown people, through the throng of galloping horses and wagons, and at last was on the lake shore. There was a place there, just south of the mouth of the river, where the beach was much wider than elsewhere. The Illinois Central Railroad had a depot there and several tracks, and there were two grain elevators—all widely scattered—but little else. North and South of us the beach was much narrower, and there many people were driven by the heat far out into the water, and some were drowned.

V

MERCHANTS near the lake front and men helping them were carrying goods out on that vacant tract—bolts upon bolts of silk, woolen and linen cloth, and even some cotton; men's ready-made clothing, women's cloaks, furs and millinery (there were no other women's ready-to-wear things then), jewelry and silverware, tobacconists' goods, even a few groceries. It's funny now to recall how some of the people who got out there first were resentful at the crowds who came later and at the merchants for filling up the space with their goods. It was an imposition, they thought; those late-comers and storekeepers should have gone somewhere else. There was much confusion, excitement and terror on that little patch of ground, but not much thievery or robbery, I think; at least, I didn't hear of any.

There we sat and watched the fire march by. When it was at its nearest point, just opposite us, the heat was so great that we had to retreat out to the farther edge of our plot, and some waded into the water or were pushed in, but did not stay there long. A grain elevator which stood near us, iso-

lated from other buildings, was not touched. The wind was blowing the blazing embers almost straight northward now, and few of them fell among us. Before sunrise the flames had crossed the river. Many citizens of the North Side had come down to the river to see the fire in the main city, and suddenly discovered to their horror that the water-works and other buildings were burning, nearly a mile behind them. The fire-fiend spent Monday in cleaning up the North Side, and only stopped at Lincoln Park, well along towards evening.

Somewhere about dawn or time for dawn I went to sleep with my head pillowed on a bolt of cloth, while Bernard slumbered beside me, lying on a pile of Men's Fine $10 Suits. The people around me, learning my story, were very kind. In fact, some of the things I remember best about the great fire are the wonderful fellowship, sympathy, and kindness which it brought forth from rich and poor both in and out of Chicago. I have never seen such helpfulness and self-sacrifice, such team work for the benefit of others as then—though I suppose the same is true at the time of nearly all great disasters.

I must have slept for two or three hours. When I awoke, it was supposed to be well along in the forenoon; but it was like a very cloudy forenoon,

indeed. Such a pall of smoke was hanging over us that the sun could only be seen dimly, a sort of dull red ball, through it. Piles of ruins were still blazing and smoking in all directions.

A woman who had brought a full bottle of milk for her baby gave half of it to Bernard, and somebody else gave me a little bread and meat. With that snack we had to get along until late in the day. The hours dragged by until about the middle of the afternoon, when some people began to drift southward on Michigan Avenue, hoping to reach friends or relatives. Nobody tried to go north, for the bridges across the river were gone, the boats were burned and the whole North Side was a dreary waste and much of it still burning.

It was reported that the South Side had been spared, and I decided to go around that way, cross the river and come up on the West bank as nearly as possible to where my home had been. I was somewhat stunned by the disaster—a bit like shell shock, I suppose. I wanted to learn the fate of my mother and sisters—to find somebody to share with me the terrible responsibility of the baby; but if I had found them dead, I wouldn't have been much more dazed and shocked than I was already.

Of course it was impossible to cross the business section yet. Even some of the frame structures were still glowing; and great piles of red hot brick, stone,

marble and iron, where the new Pacific Hotel, the Sherman House, the Palmer House, the Tribune Building, the Court House, the Chamber of Commerce, the Tremont House, the Bigelow House and all the other big downtown buildings had been were still spouting flame. So I went south on Michigan Avenue, even then compelled to keep on its outer edge near the lake because of the heat. I saw at least two dead men by the way, and certain masses that looked like burned rags might have been others.

Congress Street was the southern limit of the fire on the lake front. From there its southern boundary ran in a diagonal line southwest to the beginning at De Koven and Jefferson. I zigzagged along the edge of the burned district, seeing thousands of others wandering like myself, hordes of curious sightseers and many wagons still hauling those pitiful loads of household goods which perhaps hadn't yet found a resting place. A slow rain had begun to fall—too late to save the city—and it added to the discomfort of Bernard and me. I was very much afraid he would catch cold, so I wrapped my coat around him. I was very tired and ravenously hungry, and of course he was, too. He cried almost incessantly.

I learned by questioning people on the way that our home neighborhood had certainly been burned

over. How in the world would I ever learn the fate of Mother and my sisters? My opinion was that if they had been hard pressed by the fire, they would be most apt to dash right across the river by the Madison Street bridge, and would therefore be likely to be somewhere on the West Side. Of course it was impracticable to reach any of the bridges at Madison, Van Buren, or Taylor Streets; one man even told me that the Twelfth Street bridge was gone—a false report—and so I walked six blocks more out of my way to reach the one at Eighteenth Street. By that time I was getting pretty well fagged out.

Having crossed the river, I turned northward on the west side, but I realized that I couldn't go much farther. I had stopped several times under porches and awnings and set the baby down to rest myself, but my arms felt as if they were nearly paralyzed and my back was getting weak. I was soaking wet from the rain which still continued to fall slowly, and I was afraid Bernard might be ill from the exposure.

I had noticed on the way that the churches were headquarters for refugees, and I decided to stop at the next one I saw. I had walked somewhere between four and five miles, I suppose, when I came to a big church where the lamps were lighted and many people were going in and out. I staggered

into the portico and sank down on the steps, exhausted.

Kind women gathered around me immediately, took Bernard out of my arms and led me inside to a big, roaring stove, where I dried myself and grew drowsy. I do not know how many people were being sheltered in the church, but there were scores, perhaps hundreds of them. Again I say that the God in men and women comes out strongest at such a time as that. The good Christians in that church—most of whose homes had been spared by the fire, but many of whom had lost their businesses—were working their heads off and giving all that they could spare and more, too, to aid the sufferers. Bernard was cuddled and given a bottle of milk and I was given a good supper—all I could eat. I fell asleep before I had finished it. They laid me on a cushioned church bench and I slept like the dead for twelve hours.

When I awoke next morning I could smell hot coffee and see stacks of ham sandwiches on a bench near by, and physically I felt like a new man already; but my first thought upon awaking was one of worry for Mother and the girls. After eating breakfast I suggested to one of the women that they take care of Bernard while I went to seek my family in our old neighborhood.

"No, you stay right here," she commanded.



MRS. RICHARD FITZGERALD, EDDIE FOY'S MOTHER

"We'll try to do that for you. Your folks probably aren't anywhere near your old home, and you'd never find them by wandering around." She then went on to explain that the citizens were already beginning to organize a sort of identification service in an effort to get families together and find out how many lives had been lost. They took my name and my mother's and our home address, and cautioned me not to stray far from the church, as they might have news for me at any time.

All day I waited and worried, and when I lay down to sleep at night, we had heard nothing. Messengers were bustling in and out all day and the volunteer workers were busier than bees, but to some of the refugees who had nothing to do, the time dragged frightfully. Several others beside myself were clamoring for news and some were kicking on the accommodations and service that were being given them, and by nightfall the good souls who were doing the work were nearly distracted.

But early in the following forenoon a man with a paper in his hand came towards me and said, "Is this Eddie Fitzgerald?"

"Yes, sir," said I.

"Your mother and sisters are at the Scammon School," said he. "Corner Madison and Halstead."

It was only about thirty-six hours after the halt-

ing of the fire. As I look back on it and remember the chaos that followed the disaster, it seems marvelous to me that they found my people as quickly as they did. When you consider that they had no telephones then, and all news and instructions had to be carried by messenger, you must admit that for personal efficiency the Twentieth Century had nothing on those citizens of Chicago in '71.

A place was made for the baby and me on a wagon, and I rode up to the Scammon School. I found a number of tents set up in the yard, and learned that Mother and the girls were being sheltered in one of them. Supposing that they had heard news of me, I burst in on them without warning and gave them the shock of their lives. They were all very close to prostration already, and Catherine came near fainting. Then we kissed each other all around and all wept in chorus, myself as freely as anybody—all, that is, save Bernard who, well fed and glad to be in the family circle again, very sensibly laughed.

I learned from the three that the fire had stolen upon them much more rapidly than they had expected. They did not leave the house until the last minute; and by that time they were so hard pressed that they could do nothing but flee across the Madison Street bridge, which was only a few yards away. Meanwhile, the old drayman had promised

so many other neighbors to help them out that he had room for only a little of Mother's stuff; and in the final hurly-burly the only things they saved were an old sofa and a feather bed. They dashed across the bridge barely a half second before it was swung open; men were already pushing against the long wooden sweep (all the river bridges were swung by hand) to open it and thus prevent its being burned and carrying the fire across to the West Side.

Mother said they comforted themselves with the thought that if the fire approached Mr. Jackson's place, I would just step across one of the bridges to the North Side. When they learned on Monday that the North Side had been devastated too, their hearts sank, and they had almost made up their minds that they would never again see Bernard or me alive.

VI

JAMES FISK, JR., the famous (or should I say notorious?) Wall Street plunger and railroad manipulator of Reconstruction days, was a queer mixture of good and bad. Utterly ruthless in his business dealings with other financiers, there isn't the slightest doubt that he had a remarkably kind heart and great sympathy for human beings in distress. His benefactions were not all given just to win favor and wheedle the public into forgiving his shady finance, either; he conferred a great many secretly and got no public credit for them whatsoever.

At the time of the Chicago fire he and Jay Gould were in control of the Erie Railroad. The flames had not yet gone out when he was urging the people of the East to contribute flour, meat and other foods, also clothing and anything else suitable to the sufferers from the disaster, and he agreed to carry it all to Chicago on his railroad free of charge. Within the next few days tons of stuff came to Chicago through his agency, not only from the East but from numerous other towns along the line of the Erie, and helped much to

relieve the distress. Of course other parts of the country contributed, too, even to the Pacific Coast —why, the nearby districts sent cooked fowls, buttered bread, sandwiches and cooked vegetables all ready to eat; but I'm speaking now particularly of the benefactions of Fisk.

He also announced that any fire sufferer who wished to go to New York or any other point on the Erie to begin life anew would be given a pass. At that time there was a pretty widespread belief that Chicago was ruined. Many of the most hopeful both in and out of Chicago predicted that at least it would take several years for her to recover from the shock. My mother was among the pessimistic ones, and I'll admit that to me, too, Chicago looked pretty much like a hopeless case. So Mother thought we'd better take advantage of Colonel Fisk's offer and go back to New York. And back we went. We took lodgings in Cherry Street, and because of our being fire sufferers, some of our friends and neighbors promoted a benefit festival for us which netted twenty-one dollars.

But somehow, times seemed hard in New York that winter, and we could get little to do. The only work that could be done by women and boys at that period brought little more than starvation wages, and there didn't seem to be much of it to be had in New York, either. But it's a rather signi-

ficant thing that no matter how desperately poor a family might be, boys who had been brought up even no more than half-way decently never thought of going out with pistols and sticking up jewelry stores and paymasters, as boys of fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen are doing today—and frequently committing murder into the bargain. There was something different in the atmosphere then—call it Puritanism or Victorianism, if you like. Poor people seemed to take more pride in their good name. Today there are community houses, free clinics, free vocational schools, free libraries and reading rooms, the Salvation Army and fifty-seven other varieties of charitable and benevolent services, almost none of which we had fifty-five to sixty years ago, and all calculated to make it easier for poor people to stay honest—but the system doesn't seem to work as well as it ought. There's a different element in the atmosphere of America today.

Meanwhile we were hearing accounts daily of how rapidly Chicago was rising from her ashes—erecting far bigger and finer buildings than before the fire—the new Chicago was going to make the old look like a backwoods village! You'd think to hear the talk that came from there that the fire had been the greatest blessing that ever happened to the city.

Of course all this caused much remorse in our

family, and we were soon bemoaning our bad judgment in having left Chicago. I was particularly anxious to get back, for I had learned to like the town and had some good friends there, whereas New York had become strange to me; life changes rapidly for a youngster between the years of nine and fifteen.

But how to get back! We couldn't afford the money for the tickets, and Mother's brother, never very well-to-do, was far less prosperous now than he had been in 1865. Mother knew his circumstances and never thought of asking him for help.

But what about Colonel Fisk? He was the Good Samaritan of New York and he owned a railroad to Chicago—that is, he and Gould owned it; and Gould, though he never got any credit for it, never seemed to object when Fisk used the road for benevolent purposes, which of course cost him as much as they did Fisk. That little credit for Jay Gould shouldn't be forgotten.

Jim Fisk, however, was the man to whom everyone appealed. As we used to sing after his death:

> "He may have done wrong, but he thought he done right,
> And he always was good to the poor."

He called the police captain of his district into his office one day and said, "Captain, I know that there must be many widows and orphans that you

know about in your precinct who need help in one way and another. If you'll make a note of 'em when they come to your attention, I'll give 'em a ton of coal or a barrel of flour, whichever they need most." He paused a moment. "Yes, damn it!" he went on, "I'll give 'em the coal and the flour both, if they're very poor. Just send me the orders. But I don't want any publicity about this. You must keep it absolutely secret." And then as the officer was going out, he called after him, "And by the way, Captain, if there are any worthy people who want to emigrate west and haven't the money for railroad fare, I'll give 'em passes."

It seemed quite the ordinary and logical thing to ask Colonel Fisk for passes back to Chicago. We didn't regard that as charity. Poor as we were, we never asked for charity in our lives. But a railroad pass in those days was something different. It was just a small favor which was being handed out by the thousand. It seemed to me that about a third of the people who travelled then rode on passes; not only railroad employes, legislators, Government employes, and many preachers, but thousands of people for whom you could figure out no excuse whatsoever. The railroads were new toys, most of them were making money hand over fist, and they hadn't yet figured out all this dope about cost per mile per passenger. Not only did railroad officials

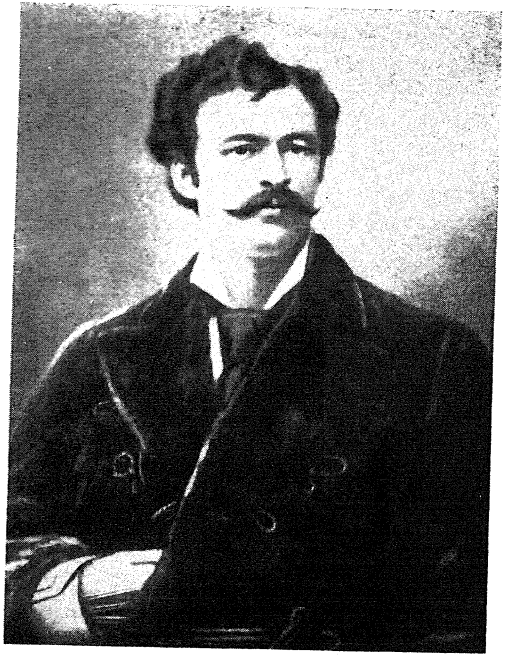
give passes to their friends, but employes such as conductors and engineers would write on a card, "Pass So-and-so," sign their names and give the cards to friends or kinsmen who wanted to go somewhere, and every conductor on their line would honor them. The railroad companies forbade this, of course, but it went on just the same.

So when Mother decided to ask Colonel Fisk for passes, she just sent me around to his office as she would have sent me to the corner drug store to ask for a copy of the latest Hostetter's Almanac. The offices of Gould and Fisk were in the Grand Opera House building—still standing, by the way, at the corner of Twenty-third Street and Eighth Avenue. They had bought the building several years before, remodelled it and at Fisk's desire had built the theatre into it, where for a long time he put on Offenbach's operas in rather magnificent style. There President Grant was unwise enough to accept a box from the partners one evening soon after his inauguration, and in conversation with him that night Gould got the idea which led to the Black Friday of 1869, when he and Fisk were literally besieged in their offices, and surrounded the building with armed sluggers and gunmen to protect themselves.

Their offices on the second floor of the building were fitted up with all the magnificence of which



JIM FISK



BILLY EMERSON, THE FAMOUS MINSTREL,
AND HIS $1,000 OVERCOAT

that age was capable—marble and onyx and walnut, with much gilt plaster rococo work and thick-piled carpets in brilliant colors. I made my request known to a man in the outer office and he said he would send for Mr. Fisk's manager. Jay Gould had been pointed out to me on another occasion that winter, and while I was waiting, Fisk passed through the office—a chubby, florid man with bright blue eyes and reddish-brown hair and mustache. I recall very distinctly his high-pitched voice and Yankee twang.

Presently the manager came out and questioned me, but evidently didn't like to take action on the word of a fifteen-year old boy, so he told me to come back and bring my mother. Mother and I went up next morning, and after a short interview he told us that he thought the matter could be arranged; and that if so we would be able to get the passes on the following Monday.

That was Friday, January 5th, 1872. Fisk had for some time been at feud with another big stock-market operator named Edward Stokes. There were at least two reasons for their bad blood; one, an actress named Josie Mansfield whom they both wanted, the other, a group of oil refineries on Long Island. Fisk accused Stokes of fraud in the oil matter and on Saturday, the following day after our call. Stokes learned that the other had had a bench

warrant issued for his arrest. He was furious. He put a pistol in his pocket at once, and went out seeking his enemy. Late in the afternoon he heard that Fisk was going to the Grand Central Hotel, on Broadway between Third and Bleecker Streets; it is still standing and in use as a hotel, though they call it the Broadway Central now. Fisk entered the lobby about six o'clock, and started up the broad stairway to the second floor. There Stokes met him and shot him through the abdomen. He lived only a few hours.

That murder was one of the greatest sensations of the "flash period" of America which followed the Civil War. People all over the country were talking about it and eagerly devouring the columns of gossip in the newspapers. But nowhere did it create a more tremendous sensation than in our household. We looked at each other in consternation when we heard the news on Sunday. "We'll never get those passes now," said one of us.

Nevertheless, Mother said she would make the attempt, and so on Monday morning she and I went up to the Grand Opera House. We more than half expected to find the building closed. But the doors were unlocked, though there were few people about and evidently no business was being done. We found a man in the outer office who looked at

us in astonishment and disapproval when we timidly stated our errand.

"I'm sorry to trouble ye at such a time as this," said Mother. "I know that Mr. Fisk—God rest his soul!—is dead, but we need those passes very much, and I thought that maybe he might have arranged it—before he——"

The man said he would see, and went away. He was gone a long time and our spirits sank very low. But finally he came back and he had an envelope in his hand—our passes! Fisk had approved them on Saturday; he never hesitated long over beneficence.

VII

WE were back in Chicago again and I was happy, for there were two or three friends there (Ben Collins, my old night-school chum, was one) who had ambitions similar to mine, and it was possible that I might yet form a song-and-dance partnership with one of them which would take the country by storm.

Soon after we returned to Chicago Mother was employed as a sort of nurse, guard, and companion to Mrs. Abraham Lincoln. Mrs. Lincoln had always been a woman of rather unusual disposition, and it will be remembered that she had had some spells of "temperament" even while she was in the White House. After her husband's assassination she fell into deep melancholy, and after her son Tad died in Chicago in 1871 (the third son she had lost) she suffered from periods of mild insanity.

She had many strange delusions at these times. She thought gas was an invention of the devil, and would have nothing but candles in her room. At other times she insisted on the shades being drawn and the room kept perfectly dark. Mother was with her at Springfield most of the time, but made

one or two southern trips with her in winter. The position was a trying one, and Mother gave it up twice, but each time the kinsmen induced her to come back after she had had a short rest. She remained with Mrs. Lincoln until that lady, towards the close of her life, became so much unbalanced that the family decided it was best to place her in a private sanatorium. Mrs. Lincoln died in 1882.

I was sixteen when a very momentous event took place in my life. I changed my name! Always trying to break into the show business at some crevice or other, I teamed up with one of my chums, a youth named Jack Finnegan, a year or two older than I was, to do acrobatic song-and-dance stuff. Finnegan's father was janitor of a building which belonged to Phil D. Armour, the big packer. I used sometimes to help Mr. Finnegan with his work, and when my mother was away I slept many a night in the attic of the building where he was employed. Jack's mother was dead, and his father kept him supplied with a meal ticket at a certain restaurant, where he and I used to go nearly every day to eat our favorite dish, liver and bacon. I shudder to think of the quantities of liver and bacon I ate in those days. We used to practice what we fondly called our "act" by the hour at certain quiet places down on the lake shore, where falls wouldn't hurt us. Jack was a better

acrobat than I at that time, and I thought myself lucky to hook up with him.

Our two names, Finnegan and Fitzgerald, coupled together on a program didn't suit my partner. He said it sounded too Irish. I questioned whether anything could be too Irish, but he overruled me. He had decided to take the name of Edwards. I pondered long over my stage moniker. There were two girls, the Foy sisters, working in the concert halls then (they afterwards became very famous in vaudeville) whom I admired very much, and I could think of nothing better than their name. It was short and seemed to me to have a picturesque quirk about it that made it easy to remember. So our team became Edwards and Foy, and I have been Eddie Foy ever since.

It was a long time between engagements for us. There were very few theatres in the country then which put on anything like a vaudeville show, and of course kids such as we were had very little hope of breaking into such places. As for getting into anything like the "legitimate," there wasn't one chance in ten thousand for an uneducated boy with no influential friends and no background save that of poverty and the streets and beer halls. There were few legitimate theatres, and they only in the larger cities. We're coming back towards the same condition today, but there is a new reason for it

now; the movies have driven the more expensive spoken play out of the smaller places. In my boyhood days the smaller cities and towns had little or no amusement save of the cheapest sort and that sometimes at long intervals. Most of the great stars carried no company or almost none with them on the road, but in the few large cities where they played were supported by the more or less permanent local stock company, which was usually very low-salaried, and so small that one actor frequently had to play two or three parts in an evening and many lines had to be cut out for this reason.

The only hope for young aspirants like Finnegan and myself lay in what were later called "honky-tonks"—the "beer halls" or "wine rooms" of those days, which put on an olio of stuff, good, bad, and indifferent, as an attraction to their customers—the same idea as that of the cabaret of today. As these places rose a little higher in the scale and put on a better program, they called themselves "concert halls" and charged more for their drinks. It may sound to some folks like a pretty low sort of business, but let me tell you, there was many a struggling chap like myself who started in those places because he couldn't get in anywhere else, and who later made his mark in the real theatre in one line or another. Such men and women as J. K. (Fritz) Emmett, Joe Murphy, W. J. Scanlon,

Chauncey Olcott, Sol Smith Russell, Harrigan and Hart, Barry and Fay, George S. Knight, Lotta Crabtree and dozens of others whom I might name did some of their first work in the old honkytonks. And furthermore, remember that no matter what the character of the patrons of such a place might be, the actors need not be of the same stripe. I knew girls who sang in such places who brought their mothers with them every night and who were as correct in their demeanor as any church chorister.

Finnegan and I sometimes went to outlying towns, like Joliet, Elgin, or Milwaukee, possibly on a more or less definite engagement, but more often on a mere tip that we might get work there or even just as a gamble. We could seldom afford transportation money, so we would crawl into a freight car or the trucks under it, carrying our costumes wrapped up in newspaper, and get through that way if we could. If we were thrown off, as not infrequently happened, we finished the journey on foot, unless we could get a lift on a wagon. And then we sometimes made only two or three dollars on the trip, or perhaps nothing at all.

At the corner of Van Buren and Clark Streets in Chicago in the Seventies there was a big beer hall called the Cosmopolitan which put on a rather better vaudeville program than such places usually

did, and Finnegan and I finally got a week's engagement there. It was a big boost for us, and we prepared to do our best. We expected thereafter to advertise ourselves as "direct from a week at the Cosmopolitan." Our remuneration was to be a dollar apiece per night.

We ran into professional jealousy as soon as we struck the place. Certain regulars who had been performing there for some time looked on us with considerable of a grouch. We heard mutterings about kids who weren't dry behind the ears yet, and raw amateurs coming in there and taking the bread out of honest workingmen's mouths, but we heeded not. We regarded ourselves as honest workingmen, too, and goodness knows, we needed bread to accompany our liver and bacon as much as anybody did. But the other actors had plenty of friends among the patrons, and they were prepared to make life uneasy for us if they had half an excuse.

The Cosmopolitan was a large place of its kind. It had a stage at one end of the hall and a little corner screened off alongside it which was mostly cut up into dressing rooms. There we nervously awaited our turn.

Finally the team of Edwards and Foy were called, and we bounded on to the stage, all togged out in our jackets and knee trousers of red-and-white striped bed-ticking, to face some cold stares

and low murmurs of hostility. We had a song of which the chorus ran:

Blue eyes and golden hair—
(*Five dance steps and a somersault*)
No other maid so fair—
(*Five more steps and another flip-flop*)
In a brownstone front on Broadway
Or a cottage at Cape May,
If you want to win a pretty girl
Those are the cards to play.

—and then some more dancing and acrobatic stuff. Don't ask me what relation the somersaults bore to the sentiment in our chorus. We had to put them in somewhere, didn't we? And when you come right down to brass tacks, that act of ours wasn't any worse than what some of the vaudevillians have been doing ever since.

Well, we got through our first verse and chorus in fine style until we came to the second flip-flop. I was still in the air when I heard a low, dull "wham" at my left. Finnegan-Edwards, usually a sure performer, had slipped somehow in his take-off and flopped full-length on the stage like a bag of salt. The shock came near wrecking my own leap, but I managed to come down right side up.

Maybe that crowd didn't give us the razz! The pals of the other actors did everything but tear the

roof off. "Put 'em out!" "Git some actors!" "Git somebody that can stand up!" were a few of the milder criticisms. We got through our second stanza without any more disaster but amid considerable disorder, and then hurried off. Now, the dramatic manager at the Cosmopolitan was a fellow named Thompson—a thoroughly hard-boiled guy, who would just as soon wallop an actor in the jaw as not, and frequently did it. He met us with a volley of abuse and cuss-words; we were fakers, misfits, club-footed half-wits, we'd gotten in there under false pretenses. Finnegan suddenly interrupted him.

"Where can we wash up?" he demanded; for we had as yet seen no sign of a lavatory or wash-bowl.

"Didja bring your own soap?" sneered Thompson.

I saw a dangerous look dawning in Finnegan's eye. I knew that like Cousin Egbert, he could be pushed just so far. He was a big, beefy chap and no slouch of a scrapper himself.

"For Heaven's sake, don't start anything, Jack," I begged him aside. "This fellow's a bad egg."

But Thompson made just one more nasty crack, and then Jack hit him. At that, I sank down in despair on the steps leading up to the stage, and tears flowed down my cheeks. After all our struggles, when we had finally succeeded in landing a

good engagement, here we had flopped on the very first night, and now my partner was licking the manager. Yes, he was really doing it! My career seemed once more to have been nipped in the bud. I was ruined! But these gloomy thoughts had scarcely passed once through my mind when I discovered to my intense astonishment that the fight was over, and that Thompson was shaking hands with Finnegan and telling him we were all right and he hoped we'd stay with him.

Meanwhile, a very attractive little girl of fourteen, Rose Howland, the younger of the two Howland Sisters who were doing a turn at the place, began to berate Thompson for his treatment of us, and of me in particular.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Mr. Thompson!" she raged, "Abusing that child that way. Just see how he's crying! Why don't you let them wash up? Don't cry, little boy," she said to me; "I'll give you some soap if he don't."

Little boy! She was two years younger than I was and three or four inches shorter, but in poise she was a grandmother as compared to me. Her sympathy added the last drop to my humiliation. I turned from her peevishly, but hating myself for doing it; for she was clever, pretty, winsome, and well-behaved—to say nothing of being a real dramatic artist. She and her sister were two girls

whose mother always went with them. I saw Rose from time to time in the years that followed, and soon grew old enough to laugh with her at the ridiculous figure I must have cut that night at the Cosmopolitan. Six years later, in Leadville—but I'll tell that when I come to it.

Notwithstanding Thompson had come around so handsomely, Finnegan was so embarrassed by his accident that he wouldn't act at the Cosmopolitan any more, and I finished out the week alone; and then came more long, barren periods when I couldn't get anything at all. I tried to join John Robinson's circus once as acrobat and comedian. They wouldn't employ me when the show was in Chicago, so I sneaked on to the train when it pulled out and went with them anyhow. They didn't fire me until we reached South Bend, Indiana, because they didn't find me; but there they threw me out of their midst so emphatically that I began to believe they really didn't want me. So I sadly journeyed back to Chicago the best way I could—partly on freight trains, partly in kindly farmers' wagons, partly on foot.

Ben Collins and I then organized a team and got an occasional job in the halls. Ben couldn't do acrobatic stuff, but he was a good dancer, clever at putting over a comic song, and a genius who could not only devise numerous gags and stunts, but

write his own songs. He was tall and thin, with a solemn, ludicrous countenance. As he was no musician, nearly all the songs he wrote were parodies on some sentimental or tragic poem—the more solemn it was, the better. The first stanza of his parody of "Bingen on the Rhine" will give a good idea of what used to knock 'em off their seats forty and fifty years ago:

A bum in front of a theatre door stood waiting for a check;
The police tried to drive him off, but he firmly stood on deck.
His stomach yearned for lunch, so he turned and entered a saloon,
But the barkeep hit him in the eye with an Etruscan brown spittoon.
The weary bummer faltered as he sadly murmured, "Sure
You wouldn't treat me thusly, only you know I'm poor.
Why, I've been mistaken for Vanderbilt, but you can see I'm not the man;
For I was born in Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo in Michigan."

The accent should of course be placed on the last syllable in "Michigan." A large part of the punch in this parody lay in that name Kalamazoo. For years after the town first became known, in fact until very recently, the word Kalamazoo was considered highly humorous, and it alone was sufficient to put a vaudeville or minstrel joke over with a bang. In later years Oshkosh was taken up by the jokesters and was considered even funnier. The quantity of laughter caused by those two words in

the past half century is incalculable. Oshkosh and Kalamazoo—to say nothing of Hoboken, Kokomo, Bucyrus, Keokuk, Saginaw and a few other towns —should be regarded as public benefactors; their names have added so much to the gayety of the nation and to relief from indigestion.

VIII

I SEIZED every opportunity in those youthful days to see the great actors of the period. Sometimes (when I grew old enough) I got into the play itself as a supernumerary, and once in a while I managed to squeeze out a quarter for a gallery seat. I saw Charlotte Cushman in one of her greatest parts, Meg Merrilees. I saw Joseph Jefferson in his prime as Rip, Bob Acres and Dr. Pangloss. I saw Edwin Booth, Lawrence Barrett, John McCullough and other stars of the day, either from the gallery or from the stage. I was trying to get in as an extra when I was a little too large to be a page and not big and brawny enough to look vicious and carry a spear. Another year or two did much to mend the latter disability, and presently I was being taken on as a super, though at first they had to paint either lines or whiskers on my face to age me a bit.

Collins, Finnegan and all my other stage-struck friends did the same, and we had opportunity to study some wonderful dramatic art and, incidentally, to enjoy portions of some fascinating plays—for they usually cleared us out of the way after our

time on the stage was over. An occasional manager who was disposed to be cheap or who couldn't afford to be otherwise gave the supers no pay save glory and the pleasure of seeing a part of the show; but after we had had a little experience we refused to do business with that sort of entertainment. Our regular honorarium in the high class productions where we worked was fifty cents per night. There was a middleman or *padrone* at both McVicker's and the Academy of Music who had the job of collecting and hiring us, and my information is that he got a dollar a head for us and pocketed the other half.

How we envied the "basket boys," as the regular repertoire actors were called, because each had a big basket in which all his costumes were carried; the one, for example, which he wore as Brabantio in *Othello,* as the King in *Hamlet,* as Casca in *Julius Caesar* and so on. The same costume could sometimes do for several parts—at least, it was forced to serve for several. The majority of the garments were decidedly fustian, too—very little real silk and velvet and brocade and jewels then. The gaslights were dimmer than our electricity, and more was left to the imagination of the audience.

As for our "super" costumes, they were still cheaper and fewer in number, so that one often

wore precisely the same suit in ancient, medieval and tolerably modern characters. And the men collected at random for the parts didn't always fit the costumes. Sometimes a big fellow like Finnegan would fairly split his trunk hose during the play, while some skinny little chap would be wearing alleged tights "a world too wide for his shrunk shank" and hanging in folds about his calves. The gallery was disposed to be boisterous in the Seventies, and when several friends up there recognized you on the stage and bawled "Supe!" it was a bit disconcerting, though you had the consolation of knowing that their jeers were prompted largely by envy.

I appeared as citizen, ruffian, soldier, peasant, or brigand in *Julius Caesar, Coriolanus, Macbeth, Richelieu, The Robbers, Virginius, Ingomar* and other plays, most of them very heavy tragedy. With the matchless Edwin Booth I even had the honor of appearing in *Hamlet*—sometimes as a guard or attendant, sometimes as one of the strolling players.

Edwin Booth! What a giant of the mimic world he was! As a classic tragedian we haven't seen his like since. The most magnificent male voice that I have ever heard on the stage, and the greatest dramatic genius for certain parts—Hamlet, for example. In my opinion, no Hamlet of the past quarter century is in his class. He followed to the

letter Hamlet's advice to the players, which he so often recited; he did not saw the air nor tear a passion to tatters; but suited the action to the word, speaking his lines trippingly on the tongue, yet never overstepping the modesty of Nature, and with a temperance which gave his discourse smoothness. Repression was a feature of most of Booth's serious acting; he never ranted nor raised his voice unnecessarily. I have seen him, a rather small, slender figure, come upon a stage full of bigger men and begin speaking in a low, even tone, and in a moment there would be a deathlike stillness in the house. Within two minutes he dominated the whole scene; you forgot that there was anyone else on the stage.

He was a master of the art of pantomime, and particularly expressive with his hands. Some little critics have complained that he moved his hands too much and too nervously. I wish we had more actors who could do with those members what he did. And just here, at the expense of my modesty, I want to quote from an address made by Augustus Thomas a few years ago before a graduating class of the American Academy of Dramatic Art.

"In my opinion," said Mr. Thomas, "the man who uses his hands most gracefully in the theatre today is Eddie Foy. You laugh at my mention of him because he is a comedian. Eddie wouldn't

object if we called him a good professional clown. But his gestures are marvelously graceful; and it is his knowledge of boxing that makes him so easy with his hands."

Now with all possible respect for Mr. Thomas, whom I admire very much, I must say that I do not think any grace which I may have displayed with my hands is in very large measure due to my experience as a decidedly amateurish boxer. I think rather that it owed its origin to the appreciation of the possibility of beautiful expression with the hands which I derived from watching Edwin Booth. From that time forward I was always training my hands to say things—to say them comically sometimes, it is true, but still deftly, perhaps even gracefully.

Booth and Joseph Jefferson appealed to me and do yet as the two greatest American actors. I was particularly interested in Booth in my very youthful days because at that time I wanted to do tragedy—the heavier, the better—and I fully believed that I would some day achieve it. I used to stand spellbound, watching him do his marvelous Hamlet, and saying to myself, so fervently that it was a prayer, "Oh, God, will I ever be able to do that?" I got hold of some cheap, tattered copies of *Hamlet* and other Shakespearean things and conned them by the hour. I made myself odious to my

family and friends by my striding with long, dragging steps and reciting with finger on brow, "To be or not to be—" or raving:

> "Art thou some god, some angel or some devil
> That mak'st my blood cold and my hair to stare?"

Most geese long to be swans, I reckon, and it's amazing how many comedians, and some very successful comedians, at that, have yearned for a chance to strut through the old-time classic drama in blank verse. I think this disease used to be somewhat more prevalent among comedians than it is now—although almost every comedian still thinks that he really ought to be doing something more serious than he is. Forty years and more ago a comedian, especially what was called a "low" or farce comedian, was apt to be regarded rather condescendingly by the intelligentsia. Many of the trade resented this keenly and longed to show the highbrows and the rest of the world as well that they could do something better than play the fool. Furthermore, their mouths watered as they heard that Booth was making $75,000 a year.

But as time went on, the good farce and musical comedy stars were treated with more respect by critics and public and they earned more money. Nowadays a college professor isn't at all ashamed to be seen laughing at Charlie Chaplin. Likewise,

in these latter days we have come to realize that a great deal of that old pompous tragic stuff which the highbrows used to admire so greatly and which stage-struck youngsters mouthed so endlessly was mostly sound and fury, tinsel and bombast. I don't mean Shakespeare, but some of the imitation Shakespeare of the Nineteenth Century—such plays as *Brutus, Virginius, Ingomar, Caius Gracchus, Cromwell* and the like, which were considered big-time stuff half a century ago.

It took me several years to realize that my face wasn't built for tragedy, and that it would be a pity to waste my talents as a dancer and funmaker. But after I had given up the hope of playing Hamlet and Lear and had made a success in musical comedy and extravaganza foolery, I still clung to the hope that I might some day do something a bit more serious, or at least might be permitted to essay the part of that wittiest and most delightful of Shakespeare's jesters, Touchstone. But somehow the managers couldn't see me even as a Shakespearean clown.

I had my greatest opportunity to see Booth during his long run at McVicker's in the spring of 1876. Collins and Finnegan were two others who "suped" with me, and we, like the star, played many parts. Finnegan got himself in bad with the great man, however, and was given the air before

the engagement was over. He and I were chosen one day to be among the strolling players in *Hamlet.* In our first scene with the Prince, after he had given us our instructions and expounded his theory of acting, we made deep obeisances and half backed out in true court style—all but Finnegan. Either he forgot his manners or else he hadn't been properly rehearsed, for he simply turned and clumped out with his head in air as if a Prince of Denmark were no more to him than a two-spot.

Booth was furious. When he came off the stage a few minutes later, he was rumbling in his deep voice, "Where is that——damned——fool? Where is that —— dogan?" "Dogan" was his own private word for a scrub actor—a "ham" of the lowest type. Where he dug it up or what its intrinsic meaning was, I haven't the slightest idea. We warned Finnegan and got him out of the way before the Jovian lightning struck him. "I'm afraid you'll never be a tragedian, Jack," Collins told him, sadly.

Collins stood higher with Booth than Finnegan because he wrote poems about him—long, laudatory odes which he labored to polish much more carefully than he ever did his slap-dash parodies. At various times he handed two or three of these effusions to Booth backstage and the kindly tragedian, doubtless guessing that Ben hadn't written

the poems for fun, gave him a five- or ten-dollar honorarium on each occasion. What Mr. Booth thought of the poetry I don't know; he might have laughed at it in secret, but the grave courtesy with which he treated Ben at these times gave no hint of it. I can laugh yet as I recall one of those scenes; the tall, gangling Collins waylaying Booth in the corridor that led to his dressing-room and handing him the paper as solemnly as if it had been a state document, and Booth quite as gravely taking a bill out of his pocket and handing it to Collins.

IX

ABOUT the time that Booth's engagement closed, Ben and I obtained jobs with a circus which had just opened on the lots in the outskirts of the city and which needed new talent. I suspect now that some of their actors had quit because of difficulty in getting their pay; but we did not learn of the show's financial worries until some time after we had started with them.

Ben and I were engaged principally to work in "the grand concert or second part, beginning immediately after the main puffawmence is ovah." We worked both single and double, for about five of us gave the whole program, notwithstanding the announcer's claim that the roster embraced all the most famous stars of the variety and opera stage. I also did a bit of acrobatic stuff in the circus proper, my principal stunt being the jumping over horses which used always to take place immediately after the grand opening parade around the ring. All the acrobats in the show took part in this, running out on a long plank and somersaulting farther and farther as more horses were placed in line, coming

down on a big pillow on the other side of them. I could jump over ten horses after a little practice, though I usually make it fifteen when I tell the story nowadays. If my hearer looks particularly easy, I say twenty.

We artists all had to assist in other ways at various times, for this was a small wagon show and there were many emergencies. Ben and I greatly enjoyed the leisurely vagabonding through the country on top of a wagon during the bright summer weather, but when there came a rainy spell and the old dressing and dining tents leaked and the wagons got stuck, as they did sometimes, in that glue-like black prairie gumbo—for scarcely a road in Illinois had even a load of gravel on it then—and we all must turn to and help lift the wheels out of the mud, meanwhile getting muddy ourselves plumb up to the ears, the thing lost some of its glamor. The good fellowship and the jesting and raillery of the dining tent were very pleasant, but they could not conceal our growing conviction that the cooking was bad and the food often stale and of none too high quality.

For two months after we joined it, the show limped around over northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin, with a side trip or two into Iowa. Our salaries were always weeks in arrears. We drew pretty good crowds, and we actors could not under-

stand why the show was so hard up. Why, the graft income alone must have been a very sweet thing, for every variety of crooked stuff known to the old show business was practised in our midst. The shell game, three-card monte and other swindles flourished openly on the grounds, and our ticket sellers, peanut and juice vendors were all short-change artists. The coarse work they got away with would have made a burglar blush. A favorite stunt of the refreshment peddlers was to jostle the hand of a customer high up in the seats so that he spilled some of his change; of course it fell through the seats, and gleaners stealing about underneath picked it up.

It became known afterwards that one of the owners of the circus who was travelling with us as manager was systematically bleeding the enterprise and pocketing the money. The end came at last in Galena, Illinois. Our forces had already been greatly reduced, and there an attachment was served on some of the equipment. Towards the close of the afternoon performance it was noised about among us that the manager had disappeared. His game was played out and he had vamosed with a fat roll.

The actors discussed the situation gloomily, sitting about on trunks and boxes at the close of the show, we concert performers still with our gro-

tesquely made-up faces. Not one of us had less than one or two months' salary coming to him.

"Well," said Ben Collins, firmly, after a solemn pause, "I ain't goin' to wash up till I get my money."

As if that manager cared whether he even went on living or not! No one but Collins would ever have thought of such a whimsical ultimatum. It gave the rest of us a laugh and relieved the tension somewhat. Presently Sam Bigley, who had been a ticket seller, drew Collins and me aside.

"I've got a proposition to make to you boys," said he. "The show's done. There won't even be a night performance, and we'll all have to look out for ourselves. Now I've got a few dollars, and my idea is this: I'll buy a horse and wagon, pick up a fiddler somewhere, and we'll go out through the country, givin' minstrel shows; make only the little cross-roads towns that never get a chance to see a show. They'll go crazy about it. I'll be middleman, you fellows ends. I see a chance to make some good money at it."

Bigley was one of the short-change experts I have mentioned, and I would not hesitate to charge that some of the few dollars he spoke of had been "held out" on his employer in the course of his ticket-selling. As I've already said, the black-face minstrel show was the most popular of all amuse-

ments at that period, and his gamble might be a good one. Anyhow, Ben and I were not disposed to question his judgment. We were ready to throw in with anyone who would put up the money and give us a job.

Travelling equipment was cheap in those days; I think the old horse that Bigley bought cost him $20 and the covered spring wagon $10. He got hold of an alleged fiddler named Fritzmeier—German, but perhaps one of the worst performers that ever insulted a violin; but Sam argued that the rubes wouldn't know the difference. I don't remember clearly what Ben's salary and mine were to be—I think it was $10 a week apiece, and board; but whatever it was, I know we didn't get it.

Thereafter we four trouped merrily over northern Illinois, carrying our whole show, performers, wardrobe and all in one light wagon. Bigley had a supply of dodgers printed whose headlines read in part:

GRAND MINSTREL SHOW
AND DANCE
AT ——— TO-NIGHT

Then followed a blurb about the company and a statement that the admission to both show and dance would be only twenty-five cents.

When we drove into a village at nightfall or early in the morning, the first concern was to find a place for our performance. There was seldom a "hall" in the village, so most of the time we must use either the schoolhouse (if we could get it) or the tavern dining-room. Wherever it was, we hastily filled in the location by hand on our dodgers and then went out and distributed them, meanwhile doing a lot of personal advertising. We threw the bills into farmers' wagons, and thereby drew some trade from the nearby country. Folks in and around those settlements were hungry for amusement but seldom saw any; and our ridiculous little show seemed to give them much pleasure.

We opened the doors at 7 o'clock. Bigley sold the tickets and of course did his short-change specialty whenever possible. Say a family of four came up to the door, and the father handed Sam a ten-dollar bill. Rapidly he would begin counting out ones in return—"A dollar for the tickets—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight—nine—and a dollar for the tickets," crowd the money into the man's hand and gently shove him forward to make room for another customer. I've seen him work that trick and others like it time and again, though he did a great deal of his slick work with quarters and halves.

We usually began the show at 7.30 or 7.45. If a

person was coming at all, he came by that time. Then Bigley would shut the doors and come to the stage to act as interlocutor, Collins being Bones and I Tambo. We would open with the "Grand Minstrel First Part," our chorus of three voices no doubt being very effective. Our jokes could not all claim to be strictly new and original, but the country folks evidently hadn't heard them, for they gave us lots of laughs. To give a sample of our wit, I would open up with, "Mr. Bigley, why is a dog's tail like the end of the world?"

"I am sure I do not know, Mr. Foy. There seems to be no resemblance. Why *is* a dog's tail like the end of the world?"

"Because it's fur to the end." (Great laughter.)

"But suppose the dog has no tail," the discomfited Bigley would rejoin.

"Oh, then it ain't so fur!" (Roars of laughter.)

Anyone who thinks this is a rotten joke is hereby informed that we had lifted it verbatim right out of the repertoire of Emerson and Manning, in whose theatre it had for months at a stretch drawn laughter from some of the best minds of Chicago.

After our grand opening we had several single and double acts, including a real circus acrobatic stunt by myself, and—though I hate to admit it—a violin solo by Fritzmeier. But Sam was apparently correct when he predicted that the rural

husbandmen wouldn't know that Fritz was rotten, for they never jeered nor threw anything at him, but on the contrary even applauded him at times.

When our none-too-long program was ended, the chairs would be pushed aside and an old-fashioned dance followed, Fritz doing the fiddling, while we three acted as hosts and one of us called the figures—for our crowds seldom knew how to dance anything but the old quadrilles, the Virginia reel and the like. By ten or eleven the party would be breaking up.

Sometimes the cross-roads settlements where we played were so small that there was no semblance of a hotel, and we ate and slept with whomever would keep us. Frequently these hosts made their charge for our entertainment so low that even Bigley couldn't kick on it. It was at the village hotels that he would usually pull his final bit of cleverness. Just as we were about to leave, he would draw forth a thin pocketbook and say, hesitatingly, "Now, how much is our bill, Mr. Jones?"

"Four dollars," perhaps the landlord would say.

At that, Sam would wilt. He would peer into the thin wallet, finger a bill or two inside it nervously and say, "My goodness, Mr. Jones, is that the best you can do?"

"Well, that's the reg'lar charge," the host would reply.

"I'm not complaining, understand," Sam would go on, humbly; "it's just that I'm awfully hard up. Business has been bad—it just seems that I can't get even, no matter how hard I try"—his voice would falter. "We only took in thirteen dollars last night (gulp) and I haven't paid these boys their salary for two weeks—and—and—"

At that point, his eyes would overflow. Actually! He needed no glycerin nor sobby violin music to help him to weep real tears like the most emotional movie star. It was a hard-hearted landlord, indeed, that wouldn't knock off a dollar, or at least a half after that. Sometimes he almost had the innkeeper crying himself—which made it all the easier for Sam to short-change him out of an additional quarter or half. Twenty minutes later, well out of town, Bigley would be roaring with laughter over the joke.

His remark about our delinquent salary came the nearest to truth of anything in his conversation. During the time—nearly three months—that I worked with him, I received, all told, just ten dollars in cash. Of course I had shelter and plenty to eat, and I really hadn't any need for spending money, for we saw no large towns.

Our old horse began to show signs of wearing out after we had been on the road a few weeks. There's no use denying that he was overworked.

Pulling a stout spring wagon and four men with their baggage over roads often heavy with mud was no sinecure; and Bigley often pushed him hard in his haste to reach a certain town early in the day, so that we could engage our hall and get out our advertising. In a little country hotel one day we met a horse trader, and he and Sam, after some sparring, began to talk business. The trader had a big, rather good-looking horse which Sam wanted. He looked far superior to the one we had. They haggled for quite a while and finally the trader agreed to accept Bigley's horse and $25 in cash in exchange for his own.

Sam was in high glee and very proud of himself when we parted from the fellow. "I believe I ought to be a horse trader myself," he chuckled. "I certainly got the best of that deal. That old rackabones I traded him was about done. This horse is worth five of him."

He continued to brag on himself for two or three days. The new horse certainly did seem to step along nicely for a while. But in less than a week he was stricken with some sudden illness—nobody could diagnose it—and twenty-four hours later he was dead.

It was then that I began to learn something of Bigley's real character. He took me aside and proposed that I steal a team of horses which he had



JIM THOMPSON, EDDIE FOY'S EARLY PARTNER

observed at a neighboring farm. I told him in perhaps not very well-chosen words what I thought of his suggestion, and he then tried it on Collins. Ben was equally emphatic in his negative. Our minstrel troupe dissolved then and there. It was getting late in the fall, anyhow, and wagon travelling was becoming not so pleasant. We were not far from Chicago, and Ben and I made our way home as best we could.

After that there came more lean days; but after a time I joined forces with a fellow named Fry for a song and dance act, and we played a few engagements in Chicago and neighboring towns. Fry was an older and more experienced man than I, but not a remarkable performer and we did not work together ideally. We were in Burlington, Iowa, when the great railroad strike of July, 1877, came on. It hurt our business, and finally we closed and dissolved partnership. I wanted to go back to Chicago, but there wasn't a wheel turning on the C. B. & Q., so I walked from Burlington to Galesburg, forty-three miles. There I found a freight train being made up in the yards for Chicago, and I rode most of the way home on it.

When I drifted in, broke and out of a job again, Mother was somewhat out of humor with me. Nobody who has never suffered from an urge like mine can understand it or sympathize with it; and

Mother was one of those who thought my craze for the footlights was mostly laziness and weak-mindedness. She was ashamed of me for avoiding honest toil. She had been insisting for years that I ought to learn a trade; but I think she had grave fears that with my weak brain, pick-and-shovel work was all I was fit for. In spite of her disapproval of my work, she used to wash my tights for me and hang them in the back yard to dry, where she insisted that they were objects of ridicule to the neighbors. She confessed to me in after years that when I began to show a liking for the stage, she had cherished hopes—though they were faint—that I might some day be a real actor, like Booth or McCullough, for example; but the frivolous stuff I was doing gave no promise of that.

Now I was twenty-one, and hadn't yet gotten anywhere in my profession. When I came back from Burlington, she intimated in her first burst of petulance (though she repented of it afterwards) that if I didn't quit my foolishness and get a job, I might have to quit boarding at home. I scoured the city looking for another engagement, but couldn't land one. I came home one evening hungry as a wolf, and in order to pep things up a bit so that I could get a good square supper, I told her I had a job at a downtown music hall at fifteen dollars a week, beginning immediately. To put the

thing over with a bigger punch, I directed her to call me early, as I had to get down to a forenoon rehearsal.

That earned me a corking good supper, as I had expected. She sent Marion out for a steak, and I ate enough for a three days' supply and went to bed. I hadn't expected that Mother would be quite so enthusiastic about calling me early next morning, but she did it up brown—she awoke me at 6 A. M.

"Waz matter?" I mumbled, still half dead with sleep.

"Get up!" she ordered. "'Twill soon be time for that rehearsal."

"Rehearsal?" I muttered, still too dopey to remember my lines, "I haven't got any rehearsal." I didn't come to myself until too late.

She stood looking at me in silent disgust for a moment, but didn't hit me with a chair, as she'd have been justified in doing. Presently she turned, went into the next room and began viciously poking the fire in the kitchen stove; and as she did so, I heard her mutter to herself, "A hell of an acthor, I'm thinkin'." Poor old Mother! She wasn't to blame for lapsing into unaccustomed profanity nor for being out of patience with me. I must have seemed almost entirely hopeless to her—predestined to be a plumb failure in life. Sometimes I

almost looked that way to myself—but I never quite gave up. In after years, when I could afford to do it, I laughed at Mother many a time for that morning's remark; and yet she would get even with me by sticking to her contention that I hadn't yet become an actor.

But I was now right on the eve of a turn in my fortunes. During the winter I got an engagement at a concert hall in Fort Wayne, Indiana, run by a man named Bethune. There were no vaudeville circuits then, no booking bureaus or agencies. Actors got jobs through a friendly system of notification among managers. If Bethune needed an acrobatic single act, he asked Hamlin and other producers in Chicago and perhaps one or two in Cincinnati and St. Louis to notify him if they knew of something good in that line. It was in this way that I landed the Fort Wayne engagement. I was happy upon arriving there to find that pretty little Rose Howland and her mother and sister were in town. Ever since she had befriended me on that disastrous night at the Cosmopolitan I had loved her and saw her whenever I had opportunity, but my financial circumstances made it out of the question for me to think of any real wooing.

Also working at Bethune's were Hall and Thompson, a well-known song and dance team, who had recently come from Hamlin's, in Chicago.

They split while at Bethune's, and Thompson, who had taken a liking to me, asked me if I wouldn't take Hall's place. Jim Thompson was a good-looking, likable young fellow a few years older than I, had a beautiful tenor voice and was a clever performer. I accepted his proposition eagerly; and thus began a partnership which was always congenial, which lasted more than six years, and in the course of which I at last began to get a real foothold on Ambition's ladder.

X

AFTER closing our engagements at Fort Wayne, Thompson and I went back to Chicago and rehearsed for several days. Through Thompson's prestige we got a short engagement at Hamlin's theatre. John A. Hamlin, by the way, will be fondly remembered by middle-aged and older people as the maker of Hamlin's Wizard Oil. Many a village dweller of the latter Sixties, the Seventies, Eighties and Nineties saw almost his only entertainment at a Wizard Oil medicine show in the street under a flickering naphtha lamp, the whole affair often consisting of no more than one man or two men with banjos. Hamlin began making Wizard Oil shortly after the Civil War and became wealthy on it. He built his theatre in Chicago just after the fire and later changed its name to the Grand Opera House. He was the father of George Hamlin, a well-known tenor singer of later years.

From Chicago we jumped to Kansas City, where we played a four week's engagement at Val Love's concert hall, located then at Fourth and Walnut Streets. The program at such places began about

8 P. M. and lasted until 2 or 3 in the morning. First there was the inevitable Grand Minstrel First Part, and all we specialty performers were expected to black up and appear in the semicircle to swell the chorus and also do a solo. Even the interlocutor and end men were as a rule single or double performers in the variety program which followed. This program, known as "the olio," lasted for at least two hours, and finally, there was a full-length drama to close the evening's entertainment. At some of the higher class concert halls legitimate dramas, ranging from pastoral comedy to tragedy, which had been seen on the regular stage, were given; but at others, such as Love's place, the plays given were usually those written especially for the concert-hall stage, and were inclined to be farcical and risqué.

From Kansas City we moved on to what was then and has been to this day one of the most famous little towns in the United States—Dodge City, Kansas. Dodge was small, but its palaces of amusement were prosperous and up to date and their patrons insisted on having high-class attractions—such as Thompson and Foy, for example. So one late spring day we sauntered on a leisurely little Santa Fé train towards what a Chicago editor had called "the Beautiful, Bibulous Babylon of the West"—to which Dodge retorted, perhaps not

without reason, that she was no worse than Chicago.

One of the most vivid of my first impressions of Dodge yet remaining is that of dust; heat, wind, and flat prairie, too, but above all dust! It had been dry for some time when we arrived, and the wind was driving clouds of yellow dust along the main street; the buildings, the horses, people's hats and clothing were covered with it.

As we rolled into town we passed an enormous pile of bones beside the track. I'm not strong on figures, but I guess that that heap must have been twenty-five feet high and a hundred feet long. The sight of it suggested to Thompson's mind the possibility that they might be killing people in Dodge faster than they could bury them; but we learned later that these were buffalo bones—buffalo, and a few cattle—awaiting shipment to manufactories of fertilizer and other products.

There was just one train a day into Dodge from the East, and the whole town turned out to meet it. City officials, police and county constabulary, merchants and their families, gamblers, cowboys, dance hall girls, bad men and bad women, they were all there on the little station platform, mingling amicably or at least courteously. Thompson and I were engaged to work at the combined concert and dance hall and gambling house owned by a man

named Ben Springer, and as we were a star attraction direct from Chicago, Ben met us at the train and proceeded to introduce us to everybody of consequence in town. Almost the first person to whom he presented me was a trim, good-looking young man with a pleasant face and carefully barbered mustache, well-tailored clothes, hat with a rakish tilt and two big silver-mounted, ivory-handled pistols in a heavy belt.

"This is our sheriff, Mr. Masterson," said Springer. "Bat, we call him."

Masterson and I soon took a liking to each other and were friends thenceforward. We were also presented to Mayor Kelley, Judge Sam Marshall (city judge, I think), Postmaster Fringer, Charlie Bassett, the City Marshal; Wyatt Earp or Erb—I think the former spelling was correct, though both have been used—one of the city police and a famous gunfighter; Jim and Virgil Earp; Luke Short and his partner Harris, gamblers; Bob Wright, a leading merchant; Kline and Shine, the newspaper men; Shotgun Collins, Doc Brown, Doc Holliday and other notables.

An ugly but fascinating little town was Dodge; one broad street running nearly east and west, with most of the buildings on the north side because the railroad ran along its southern border; but a sprinkling of buildings on the south side of the

street, too, fronting on the track, among which was Ben Springer's. As I have hinted, these business men weren't often troubled by the roar of passing trains. The rear ends of these buildings were not far from the bank of the Arkansas River—a shallow, quiet stream which went on a tear once in a while and did some damage. Spanning the river was a ramshackle wooden bridge. That way the cattle men crossed when they rode back toward Texas. When they were coming in with their herds and the river was low, they rode with them right through the stream.

At intervals along Main Street was a whisky barrel which it was the duty of the police force to keep filled with water for fire protection. Many a boozer put them to similar use by sticking his head into one here and there and cooling his own superheated interior. Most of the stores had wooden awnings or porches extending across the sidewalk. Between the posts at their outer edge was a seat for loafers, and just outside of that was usually a horse trough. Of course there were plenty of hitching posts, usually with horses stamping or dozing beside them.

It must be admitted that a goodly percentage of the buildings on Main Street were devoted to amusement and refreshment of one sort and another. There were reasons for this. Dodge enter-

tained large numbers of out of town men, mostly from Texas, who always arrived from their long, dusty journey very thirsty and lonesome. Dodge's own citizens were mostly well-behaved folk, and there were some very solid business men among them. These lived mostly on the two or three short cross streets or in scattering dwellings north of Main Street. Still farther north was a low swell called "Boot Hill," supposedly because no one was buried in the little cemetery there save men who had died with their boots on; but in reality, many kinless or friendless men who died otherwise were laid there, too. I found later that most of the Western mining camps had their Boot Hills.

Thompson and I opened at Springer's place on the night of our arrival, and seemed to give satisfaction. I didn't hesitate to josh the town a bit in my original parodies and patter. Had I known the West better then, I might have been more careful; but even as it was, I suffered no ill consequences. It may be interesting to convey a hint of what did happen, as well as to show another person's opinion of my manner as I appeared at that time by quoting from a history of Dodge City written by Robert M. Wright in 1913. Mr. Wright in the Seventies was one of the firm of Wright, Beverly & Company, owners of the biggest general store and cattle-

men's supply house in Dodge or in all that part of the country. Says he:

"Eddie Foy, one of the greatest comedians of our day, made his début or about his first appearance at Dodge City. He dressed pretty loud and had a kind of Fifth Avenue swaggering strut, and made some distasteful jokes about the cowboys. This led to their capturing Foy by roping, fixing him up in a picturesque way, ducking him in a friendly way in a horse trough, riding him around on horseback and taking other playful familiarities with him, just to show their friendship for him. The dressing up and ducking of Eddie is positively vouched for by a lady with whom he boarded and who still lives in Dodge City. The writer does not vouch for the story of the ducking, but he does know that they played pranks on him which Foy took with such good grace that he captured the cowboys completely. Every night his theatre was crowded with them, and nothing he could say or do offended them; but on the contrary, they made a little god of him. The good people of Dodge have watched his upward career with pride and pleasure, and have always taken a great interest in him and claimed him as one of their boys, because it was here that he first began to achieve greatness. I think he played here the most of one summer and

then went to Leadville, Colorado, when and where he kept going on and up. His educated admirers here predicted a great future for him. This the writer has heard them do, and surely he has not disappointed them. Here is further success and prosperity to you, Eddie, and may you live long and die happy."

The "Fifth Avenue swaggering strut" to which he refers might have been the peculiar stage walk which I was already adopting and which I used a great deal in after years. I probably wouldn't be believed if I were to say that I don't recall being ducked, so I'll let it go at that. However, the boys did haze me around a bit, just by way of initiation, but I was determined to be nonchalant and not let them see that they were worrying me, even if they broke my neck. The whole affair ended in a laugh and a drink all around; that night Thompson and I got more applause than ever, and we stayed at Dodge all summer.

My bearing on that occasion must have given the town an exaggerated idea of my courage, for I was presently offered an opportunity to enlist as a hired gunman. That year the Santa Fé and the Denver & Rio Grande Railroads were fighting for the right of way up the Grand Canyon of the Arkansas from Canyon City to Leadville, Colorado. Big strikes of silver had occurred at Leadville, the

place was beginning to boom, and had as yet no railroad. Both the Santa Fé and the Rio Grande were anxious to reach the new bonanza, the only feasible way was that up the Arkansas Canyon, and there appeared to be room for only one track. So hot did the row become that the Santa Fé asked Dodge City for a corps of gunfighters, which was enthusiastically raised. The Santa Fé being "our own road," had Dodge's sympathy in the quarrel and, besides, there was promise of good pay for the fighters. Doc Holliday suggested that I join them.

"But listen, Mr. Holliday," said I, "I'm no fighter. I wouldn't be any help to the gang. I couldn't hit a man if I shot at him."

"Oh, that's all right," he replied, easily. "The Santy Fee won't know the difference. You kin use a shotgun if you want to. Dodge wants to make a good showin' in this business. You'll help swell the crowd, and you'll get your pay, anyhow."

But I declined to join the expedition, much to Doc's disappointment. Twenty men went from Dodge, headed by Ben Thompson, a Texas man and a dangerous character who made his home for a while among us. From time to time, reports of the progress of the war came back to us from the front. It was even rumored along Main Street that our brave lads had held the roundhouse at Pueblo

for several hours against a large detachment of United States soldiers. Finally the two roads compromised the matter, greatly to the disgust of certain citizens of Dodge who had been hoping that the home boys would be permitted to wipe the D. & R. G. off the map.

Dodge was a hard-boiled little town, to be sure, but some injustice has been done it. A typical witticism of those regarding the place is credited to John Bender, a conductor on the Santa Fé. Bender was an old chap with chilled steel nerves, iron gray whiskers with a brown streak down through them from each corner of his mouth and keen gray eyes looking through old square-bowed silver spectacles. Going through a car one day he came to two bravos sprawled in a seat with dusty boots on the cushions opposite.

"Tickets!" said Bender.

"Ain't got no ticket," retorted one of the bad boys, looking sidewise at the old chap to see how he liked it.

"Where goin'?" asked the conductor.

"Goin' to hell!" was the pert reply.

It didn't faze old John. "Gimme a dollar, cash," said he, "and git off at Dodge."

Yarns like that spread the impression elsewhere that Dodge was a town where the leading industries were vice and murder, wholesale and retail. It

really never seemed to occur to an Easterner that a western gunfighter had to have some actual means of making a living. Dodge was a town of big business—thousands of head of cattle going through there every year and millions of dollars being paid for them. But that sort of thing don't make half as interesting reading as the stories of the night life and gunfighting. I can testify, however, that the majority of days passed rather peacefully in Dodge, with no killings and few fights. Some of the proprieties were very carefully observed, too. For example, a woman, no matter whether she was a housewife, a dance hall girl or even a courtesan (and mind you, the last two were not necessarily the same), was treated with grave courtesy on the street. Any man who failed to observe this canon got into trouble.

It was eye-opener to me to discover that the women who entertained Dodge, no matter in what capacity, didn't as a rule dress in silks and satins, but in ginghams and cheap prints; and that goes for the dance hall girls when they were on duty, too. In some prosperous mining camps where there were lucky prospectors with their pockets stuffed with dust, some of the girls were togged out in all the flashy finery they could lay hands on. But really wealthy men were not very numerous in Dodge; certainly the cowboys who came there didn't have

money to throw at the birds, though they sometimes spent six months' pay in twenty-four hours.

There were other impressions of such towns which have gotten slightly warped by time and distance also. Their profession may not appeal to the reader of today as having been a very moral one, but I want to say that many of those dance hall girls were personally as straight as a deaconess. I knew some who were widows, some married ones with worthless or missing husbands, and not a few of these had children. Of course their family affairs were not made public. These girls were merely hired entertainers; their job was to dance with the men, talk to them, perhaps flirt with them a bit and induce them to buy drinks—no more. They pretended to drink with the men, but if a girl drank with every chap who bought for her, she would have been thoroughly soused and out of commission before the evening was over. I knew a few of these girls who didn't drink at all; but for some such girl a bottle of wine might be sold a thousand times in a year.

I wish I could present to an audience of today an adequate picture of one of those old western amusement halls. Writers and artists have tried to do it, the movies have tried it, but all in vain—the sounds are lacking—the songs and patter from the stage at one end, where the show began at eight o'clock and

continued until long after midnight; the click and clatter of poker chips, balls, cards, dice, wheels and other devices at the other end, mingled with a medley of crisp phrases—"Thirty-five to one!" "Get your money down, folks!" "Eight to one on the colors." "Keno!" "Are you all down, gentlemen? Then up she rises!" and a thousand other bits representing the numerous varieties of games that were being played, and which, though mostly spoken in a moderate tone, combined to make a babel of sound. All around the room, up above, a sort of mezzanine, ran a row of private boxes—and they were boxes, indeed! As plain as a packing case!—where one might sit and drink and watch the show. When the various stage performances were over, there was dancing which might last until four A. M. or daybreak.

We had a rival theatre down the street—the Varieties. Opinion was divided as to which gave the best show; each house had its partisans. There was an actor at the Varieties—I will call him X, because he is still alive—who had a strong taste for the romantic drama. He induced the proprietor to let him stage such things as *The Lady of Lyons, Ruy Blas* and *Romeo and Juliet* as the finales to the evening's entertainment. Of course the script was of necessity frightfully mutilated in places. The other vaudevillians made up the cast, according

to custom, and even some of the girls off the floor had to be rung in at times. I fancy one of those productions, if we could see it today, would be funnier than the Four Marx Brothers. In *Romeo and Juliet* the only practicable balcony was one of those upstairs boxes at the corner of the stage; and X got such a stiff neck from looking up at Juliet there for two or three nights that they had to change the bill.

I dwell upon X because of the peculiar interest he took in me. He somehow got the impression that I was making eyes at a girl with whom he was infatuated. I was bunking at the time in a little one-room shack on a cross street, and X did me the honor to steal around there one night and take a couple of pot shots at me through the window. Fortunately, he was no Hickok in marksmanship, and he missed me, though not far.

More than twenty years later, I was going into Jack's restaurant in New York one evening when I met X face to face. His hair had turned white, but I recognized him immediately, and so he did me. We hesitated a moment and then stopped and shook hands, and he told me he was editor of one of the big New York daily newspapers. A few years after that he killed his wife, and is now serving a life sentence in prison.

That was the only time I was ever actually shot

at, though I've been threatened more than once. Ben Thompson, the Texas scrapper, gave me an opportunity one evening to increase my reputation for courage—with others, I mean; not with myself. Thompson was not highly popular in Dodge, Bat Masterson being one of his few friends. Thompson, about two-thirds drunk, blundered in back of the scenes at our place one evening between acts. Our wing scenery was pivoted at top and bottom, one side of it being painted for an indoor set, the other for a woodland. When turned with flat side towards the stage, one of them formed a temporary dressing room. I was sitting behind one of these pieces one night at a table, making up, when Thompson appeared, staggering. Seeing me, he drew his gun and called out, "Getcher head outa the way! I wanta shoot out that light."

The light was an oil lamp on the table at my elbow, and on the other side of me from him. Thompson didn't like me, possibly because he knew I didn't like him. Now I was seized with a sudden foolish obstinacy. I wasn't going to move my head just because a drunken bum like Thompson wanted to shoot out a lamp. Neither was I going to let him think he could scare me. So, although I had turned my head to look at him, I didn't lean back, but just sat with my eyes fixed on him as impudently as I could.

"Getcher head outa the way, I told you!" he yelled. "I'm gointa shoot out that light. If you want it through yer head, too, all right!"

With that, he pointed the gun full at me, while I still sat staring at him, hypnotized by my own stubbornness. For a long moment we confronted each other thus—and then Bat Masterson burst into the scene, threw the muzzle of Thompson's gun upward, and partly by coaxing, partly by shoving, got him out. When they had gone, I found my hands shaking so that I couldn't put on my makeup. I was limp for the rest of the evening.

Why he didn't shoot, I don't know. He didn't mind taking life; he'd killed no telling how many men, and was drunk enough at that moment to be absolutely reckless. Of course his chief desire was not to kill me but to scare me—to show me up as a tenderfoot and a weakling. But when I chose to play the daredevil, it's a wonder his trigger thumb didn't act out of sheer annoyance.

Of course I'd have been, in a way, rather small game for him. I had opportunity to study the Western gunfighter in all his aspects during my several years' stay in Dodge and various mining camps, and I observed that in his point of view and reaction, he somewhat resembled a big game hunter. A man accustomed to killing tigers would feel himself belittled if he were asked to go on a

squirrel hunt. Man is the biggest game there is; and I noticed that a gunfighter, no matter whether he was on the right or the wrong side of the law, took more pride in bagging the biggest of the big game—that is, another noted and dangerous gunfighter—than in bumping off a mere tenderfoot or somebody not particularly expert with a gun. An officer of the law might have denied any such attitude, but I could not help feeling that such men rather eagerly welcomed the chance when some noted gun-handler gave them an excuse to shoot. It was a much bigger thing to be able to point to a notch on your gun and say, "That was Billy the Kid," or "That was Wild Bill Hickok," than to be compelled to admit that "This was a clerk in Jones's store" or "That was a ham actor named Foy who was around here last summer and sorter got on my nerves."

Some of the nicknames of fellows seen around Dodge seemed to give the impression that the men who bore them were very desperate characters, indeed—Shoot 'Em Up Mike, Shoot His Eye Out Jack, for example; but I do not believe that either of those worthies had ever killed anybody. Many other nicknames were perhaps more descriptive of their owners—some others less: Dirty Face Charlie, Dog Kelly, Stink Finger Jim and The Stutterin' Kid are among those I recall. Two in-

separable pals were called The Nigh Wheeler and The Off Wheeler.

Our place was shot up one night by a gang of rough lads from Texas. There was a standing—though unwritten—police order of the town to the effect that every outsider must park his gun somewhere as soon as he came in. Most of them were kept at one or two of the leading stores, though our place was also one of the repositories. This Texas bunch had gotten partly loaded up on booze and had had some argument with Springer. Along about two A. M. they claimed their guns and started as if to ride out of town on their way homeward. But just before they rode on to the bridge across the river, they saluted us.

It had come to be one of my jobs to call the figures for the old-time square dances which were the favorites at Dodge—"All balance left! Swing the right hand lady! Alamon right!"—whatever that may mean; I don't know to this day—and at intervals of twenty minutes or so, "Balance all to the bar!"—a broad suggestion to everybody to buy a drink. We were going merrily on with the dance when suddenly, "Bang! Bang! Bang!" came a roar of eight or ten big pistols from the outer darkness, the crash of glass from our windows and shrieks from the women.

Everybody dropped to the floor at once, accord-



DODGE CITY IN 1878

ing to custom. Bat Masterson was just in the act of dealing in a game of Spanish monte with Doc Holliday, and I was impressed by the instantaneous manner in which they flattened out like pancakes on the floor. I had thought I was pretty agile myself, but those fellows had me beaten by seconds at that trick. The firing kept up until it seemed to me that the assailants had put hundreds of shots through the building. They shot through walls as well as windows, for a big .45 bullet would penetrate those plank walls as if they had been little more than paper.

The firing had been going on for a minute or so when we heard a volley from another quarter—this time out on Main Street. Some of the city police and deputy sheriffs, hastily collected, were attacking the gunfighters in flank. At that the Texas men spattered a few pellets at the police and then galloped across the bridge in flight.

Several horses were hurriedly saddled and a party of men rode across the river after the rioters, but they had too good a start and had gotten away in the darkness. The posse found one of them, badly wounded by a police bullet, on the hill just south of the river. The marvelous part of the whole affair was that aside from a few harmless scratches and some perforated clothing, nobody in the dance hall was hurt. I had just bought a new

eleven-dollar suit, and as the night was hot, I had left the coat hanging in a dressing room. When I went back to get it after the bombardment, I found that it had been penetrated by three bullets, and one of them had started a ring of fire smoldering around the hole.

I became so much a part of the life of Dodge during the two summers I stayed there that I was once even summoned to serve on a sheriff's posse. A small party of Indians out in the country had gotten tanked up on bad booze, killed a farmer and plundered his ranch. Instead of notifying the soldiers at Fort Dodge, five miles east of us, Sheriff Masterson proceeded to attend to the matter himself, and assembled a posse of thirty or more men in a few minutes. My official notice consisted of his shoving a gun into my hands and saying, "Come on, Eddie; you're deputized." I had never fired a gun in my life, and if there had been any shooting, I might have been as dangerous to my own side as to the enemy; but like George Ade's hero who was put in a false position, I didn't propose to Let On. So I got on the horse they furnished me and rode along with the rest, trying to look very grim, and keeping an anxious eye on my weapon.

Fortunately the Indians, when they sobered up, knew better than to get themselves in worse by more fighting. When we came to the place where

they were huddled, badly scared, down in a little gully, and spread out to attack them on three sides, I made up my mind that if any of the poor devils were shot by me, it would be done accidentally. I intended firing over their heads. When they came out, a pitiful few of them, with their hands in the air, I was more sorry for them than ever. The thing was on my mind as we rode back to town to lodge the prisoners in the little adobe jail—"we white men gave these Indians guns and whiskey and made them what they are, and now we are going to kill them for what our civilization has done to them."

Those Indians a few years before would not have given up so easily. The redskins in Kansas, like the buffalo, were on the sunset trail; they were growing fewer and degenerating. That enormous pile of bones beside the track at Dodge by the way, was a pathetic hint of what was happening to the buffalo. Only a few years before, when the overland telegraph was first set up, they had made themselves something of a nuisance because they regarded the frail telegraph poles as having been installed as scratching posts for them. After a number of big bulls had taken turns at leaning against a pole and sawing to and fro, scratching their shaggy hides on it, it yielded to the strain and went down.

Of course some of the buffalo whose bones were

gathered on the prairie had not been killed by white men; some of them had been lying there for years. Many a new settler, struggling to get a start on his prairie claim, might have starved or given up and gone back East had it not been for the buffalo bones which he picked up and hauled to Dodge. But the bison were now being killed by the thousand by white men. One hunter named Nickson stood almost in one spot and killed 120 animals in forty minutes. This was possible because when one was shot from a small herd, the other stupid brutes would stand around it, snorting and pawing, while the hunter picked off others as fast as he could load and shoot. In thirty-five days Nickson killed over 2,000. The principal store in Dodge sometimes had as high as 50,000 buffalo hides on hand at once.

1878 was the year of the great yellow fever epidemic at Memphis and other towns in the South. Early in September Dodge decided to make a contribution to the sufferers. Some money was raised at a public meeting, and our place gave a benefit performance, we all contributing our services. I do not remember the exact sum raised, but it was several hundred dollars—a large amount for so small a town.

It was that fall also that President Hayes and General William T. Sherman, accompanied by

their retinue and a few lesser lights, stopped for a day at Dodge while on a tour of the West. There was a semi-informal parade, a speech of welcome by the Mayor, short responses by the distinguished guests, a glance at the cattle pens, and then, as there didn't seem much else to do in Dodge in which a President could take part with dignity, Mr. Hayes went back to his car. I don't think he very strongly approved of Dodge, anyhow, for he didn't stir from the car for the rest of the day.

General Sherman, however, was induced to visit the two leading amusement resorts. As this was in daytime, there wasn't much doing in the way of entertainment, but everybody gathered around to see Old Tecumseh and talk to him, if possible. His grim face, with the deep line between the eyes, his tousled hair and stubbly beard, both reddish, streaked with gray, gave him the look of a rough-and-tumble fighting man whom it would be bad policy to stir up. He was inclined to be a bit stiff in his manner when he first reached our place; but there were several men present who had fought under him or against him down in Mississippi and Georgia, and though he knew none of them personally, he was glad to see them; and as one and another of the cowboys, traders, gamblers and so on asked questions or bandied wit with him in the easy, informal manner of the West, he relaxed and

seemingly began to like it. The boys tried kidding him in a more or less respectful manner, but he proved to be a match for all comers, shooting back bits of repartee with just the suspicion of a grin around the corners of the mouth under the grizzled beard. Two or three times he laughed outright with the crowd. "Uncle Billy" became genuinely popular before he left us.

Thompson and I closed our first engagement at Dodge in September. Perhaps we had not quite worn out our welcome, but we thought it was time for a change of scene, and besides, we had an offer from Leadville, the new boom town up in the Rockies, and were eager to see and taste the excitement of a bonanza mining camp. There were many kind expressions of regret when we announced that we were to leave soon; and really, we ourselves regretted going, for Dodge had become rather homelike to us. The whole town saw us off on the train and gave us a concerted invitation to come back—which we did the following spring.

And by the way, I may mention here that before I left Kansas City I began (with much self-satisfaction) sending a little money home regularly to Mother; and thereafter I continued the practice as long as she lived. I really began doing it before I could well afford it, just as a matter of pride; I wanted to show her that at last I was making good.

XI

THERE was still no railroad to Leadville when we reached that town in the fall of '78, nor was one completed for a year thereafter. We rode on the Santa Fé to Canyon City, and there took a stage, or rather a long buckboard, starting from a little office near the penitentiary and following a rough, winding, dangerous road up the Arkansas Canyon to Leadville.

We reached the place on September 16th. It was hot when we left Dodge, and Thompson and I still wore linen suits. Over them we wore the linen "dusters" so popular among travellers in that period of unpaved roads. These dusters were long, overcoat-like garments of brown linen, a sort of dust color themselves, intended to protect the other clothing—not for warmth. When we began to reach six, seven, eight and nine thousand feet above sea level, we found that we had come into another climate, and that those two layers of linen and our summer underwear felt like so much gauze. As the high mountain peaks clustering about Leadville came nearer to us, we remarked upon their whiteness. Suddenly Jim exclaimed, "Good Lord, Eddie,

it's snow!" I had already discovered that, but I hated to mention it aloud.

We were the only passengers in the buckboard, a lot of mail, baggage and express matter being heaped in the seats behind us. Most of the rush to Leadville at that time was going in via Denver and Fairplay; but even at that, it was an unusually light trip for our stage. Our driver, a rather grumpy-appearing old chap named Morgan, hadn't spoken a word to us since we started save when we asked him a question. Well swathed in a big overcoat, he hunched forward and gave all his attention to the horses. His legs were covered by a buffalo robe, and there was a big pile of the furs alongside his feet. Finally one of us called to him, "Mister, can't we have some of those buffalo robes back here? It's getting awful cold!"

A growl was the only answer we got, and we took it to mean "No!" We were angry for a few moments; then we decided to put a cheerful face on the situation, and we began singing. Jim led with his clear, sweet tenor and I sang alto. In that still, rare mountain air, our voices seemed to carry for miles. We sang one or two popular airs and then started a medley of our own, which opened up with "The Old Oaken Bucket" and passed thence into bits of old Negro melodies and other hits of long ago. We had sung this one almost all

the way through when Morgan suddenly yelled "Whoa!" and reined up his horses so abruptly that we were almost thrown out of our seats. I thought for a moment he was going to murder us because of the noise we were making. Instead, he began jerking buffalo robes back to us. In rapid succession he passed us four. Then turning his head only slightly, he grumbled a sort of apology over his shoulder.

"I talked kinder short to you fellers a while ago," he admitted. "I git so pestered with these blasted tenderfeet comin' up here, a-askin' fool questions and wantin' ever-thing they can't git that it drives me plumb loco. But I guess you boys are all right." And then as he clucked to his horses again, "Sing some more."

And we did. Snuggled down inside that warm fur, we sang for him all the way into Leadville. Morgan was a warm partisan of ours thereafter, and often came to see us perform. When we reached Leadville under a lowering sky, there were tiny flakes of snow in the air. The first thing Jim and I did was to hustle around and get some winter clothes.

Less than a year before our arrival, there was no post office at Leadville. In fact, up to January, '78, the place hadn't even a name. What little mail came for the small group of prospectors who had

been scratching around the site and getting out a few grains of gold for several years, went to two neighboring hamlets, Oro and Malta. Then it was discovered that black sand and rock which they had been throwing aside as worthless and a nuisance, contained silver and lead. In the fall of '77 it was supposed that there might be 300 people there—but the boom was beginning. In January '78, a mass meeting of citizens selected the name, "Leadville." When we arrived in the following September, I suppose the town may have had five thousand population or perhaps ten—it was growing so fast that it was impossible for me to make a close guess. Building lots that had been sold for $25 in the spring were now being held at $1,500 to $2,000.

It was the greatest pandemonium and hurly-burly that I had ever gotten into. The town was then built almost entirely on one street, Chestnut, about a mile in length, in a ravine among the hills. Hordes of people were rolling in every day, and there were not roofs enough to shelter them, nor beds for them to sleep in. Even in that cold weather, many were living in tents. Shacks were being knocked together as fast as they could get material, but still they couldn't catch up. The freighting wagons were bringing glass, shingles, hardware, nails, stoves, stove pipe and other neces-

sities daily, but they couldn't bring them fast enough. Chestnut Street was a babel—a tangle of human beings on foot, carrying furniture, bedding, window frames, tools and everything imaginable, and of six- and eight-mule team wagons, drivers yelling and cracking big bull whips like pistol shots, hauling out ore ($3,500,000 worth that year and $10,000,000 the following year) and bringing back building material, food and supplies.

Even the gambling houses couldn't keep up with the demand. They were gambling in tents and even in the open alongside the sidewalk. You could get any sort of bet, from five-cent chuckaluck up to a five-thousand-dollar poker pot. The shows were broader than anything I had yet seen. Vice was naked and unashamed. Robbery and thievery were of daily occurrence, and confidence men were swindling the tenderfeet right and left. In many ways Leadville made Dodge City look like a Sunday school.

Thompson and I were engaged to work at the "Grand Central," a dance and gambling hall then owned by Tom Kemp; later by Billy Tuttle. It was a bit rough, but the pickings were good. Many of the miners had funds in plenty and did not hesitate to shower coin on the stage when an act appealed to them—no chicken feed, either, for at Leadville as at other places in the West, the small-

est coin in circulation was a quarter. Everybody was living extravagantly. The deuce of it was that I caught the fever and lived extravagantly, too.

When Jim and I set out to find a room or rooms after our arrival, the task seemed well-nigh hopeless. We found that two or three of the other actors were bunking backstage in the hall, and as there seemed nothing else to do and it didn't cost us anything, we slept there, too. Even then we had considerable trouble in getting hold of a couple of small, straw-filled ticks and a blanket apiece. We didn't try to get beds, but just slept on the floor. This continued until a certain event happened which rather changed the course of things for me.

We had been at Leadville several weeks when it was announced that that charming pair of singing stars, the Howland Sisters, would appear at a concert hall up the street. I was of course not totally unaware that they were coming. They arrived—bringing their mother with them, as usual—and made a decided hit. I hadn't seen Rose for nearly a year, and I noted with proprietorial pride that she was—as I had expected—developing into a beautiful woman. Her sister sang soprano, while Rose's voice was a rich, velvety contralto. Rose had high artistic ability also, and in my opinion, if she had been given time, might have made a name on the stage which would be widely remembered yet.

We had some good times together after they arrived. Frequently late in the winter, Jim and I took the three ladies to supper at the Tontine, the "fashionable" restaurant which had just been opened. Rose and I were very much in love. We were now making what we regarded as pretty good incomes (my salary alone was twenty-five dollars a week!) and we agreed that with our unusual ability, we would undoubtedly be earning much more within a short time. Why delay? There seemed to be no logical answer save one; so one morning we met at a certain street corner and went around to a minister's house—for a few rough little frame churches had sprung up in Leadville and were doing their best against the powers of evil—and were married.

That wedding was played up as a sensation by the concert hall managers and the local newspaper. A theatrical romance! First theatrical wedding in Leadville! But the public sensation was mild as compared with the one in the Howland family. Rose's mother and sister couldn't have failed to see the trend of things, but still they'd been hoping that the worst wouldn't happen. It meant of course the break-up of the Howland Sisters team in the near future; for Rose and I had no mind to pursue our careers apart. We assured the folks, however, that the Sisters might stick together at least until

either Mr. or Mrs. Foy was through at Leadville.

Of course I couldn't ask my wife to bunk on a straw mattress on the floor backstage in a smelly concert-hall; so she remained with her mother and sister for a day or two while I searched high and low for a room; and finally found one just being vacated in a private home. It was bare and primitive and draughty, but you could scarcely get any other kind in Leadville that winter, and we were just as happy as if we had been in the Palmer House in Chicago. We were very young, and that rare, zippy mountain atmosphere at ten thousand feet above sea level put plenty of joy and kick into life.

In a café one day late in the winter I was introduced to a middle-aged man, elegantly dressed, with large, kindly eyes and one of those long, weeping-willow mustaches. "This is our leading citizen, Mr. Tabor," said the introducer.

I had already seen him often. It was Horace A. W. Tabor, the story of whose spectacular career matches any romance ever written. Born in Vermont, he had pioneered in Kansas, and though he had little education, he had served in the Kansas Legislature in the middle '50's. Thence he moved to Colorado about 1859. Early in 1877 he was keeping the post office and store at the little village of Oro. That year—as storekeepers often did—he

grubstaked two exceedingly hard-up prospectors. Those two men found the Little Pittsburgh mine, one of the richest of Leadville's bonanzas. Tabor's share in that strike was the foundation of his fortune. Thereafter, everything he touched seemed to turn to—well, not gold; not in Leadville! Rather to silver. When I met him he had passed the million mark, was wearing $600 nightshirts and had a daughter whom he had christened Silver Dollar, but he hadn't become the insufferable snob that might have been expected. He was popular because he was still genial among ordinary folks and hadn't forgotten how recently he was a small potato himself. The open-handed generosity which distinguished him when he was a Kansas pioneer and a small mountain storekeeper continued after he became a millionaire.

That year he built the Tabor Opera House in Leadville, seating somewhat over 800 and claimed to be "the finest theatre west of the Missouri River." He had an elegant suite of apartments on an upper floor of this building for himself, and he also erected a handsome home in Denver. He began building a business block and opera house in Denver. By the end of the year he was being called "Leadville's Ten-Millionaire." He was Mayor of Leadville when I met him; in the following year they made him Lieutenant-Governor of the State,

and he had begun dabbling in railroad and dock properties as far away as Chicago. For just one month early in 1883 he served as United States Senator to complete the term of Senator Teller, who had resigned.

There were many amusing anecdotes told of Tabor. He, like myself, was one of the sort genially referred to in those days as a "strictly self-made man." When his new opera house in Denver was receiving its interior decorations, he came in one day and found a sculptor modelling a plaster bust in low relief on the wall.

"Who's that?" he demanded.

"That's Shakespeare," replied the artist.

"Shakespeare!" echoed Tabor. "What the hell did he ever do for Colorado?"

When the opera house was completed, the citizens gave a banquet to Mr. Tabor, and in his principal speech the toastmaster suggested that it would be highly fitting for a portrait of the great man and his daughter to adorn the lobby of the theatre. Tabor genially responded that the same thought had occurred to him, but that he had not put it into execution because he did not want the work botched by any of these inexperienced American artists. He and Silver Dollar expected to visit Europe soon, and while there they would have the portrait painted by one of the Old Masters!



From Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper

THE MAIN STREET OF LEADVILLE IN 1879

Another incident which particularly appealed to me because of the Shakespearean reference concerned a time when Tabor was doing some political campaigning around Colorado with one of the State's noted spellbinders. One evening at the close of a flowery address the orator alluded to a debate scheduled for the following evening in the classical words, "To-morrow night we meet the enemy at Phillippi!" Tabor immediately rose in his place in the audience and said, "Judge, you are mistaken; it is at Montrose Junction."

Tabor enjoyed his great wealth scarcely fifteen years. His fall was as sudden as his rise. His fortune was swept away in the panic of 1893. He was glad to obtain a position as postmaster of Denver, and died a few years later, a comparatively poor man.

Thompson and I left Leadville just at the beginning of spring and headed for Canyon City, where we hoped to play an engagement of several weeks before returning to Dodge. Rose's mother and sister went back East. As the railroad was not yet completed—nor would it be for a year—we took the buckboard again over that picturesque road along the rim of the Grand Canyon of the Arkansas.

Our old friend Morgan was driving, and there were about seven or eight passengers, including another actor, a tumbler, who had just closed at

Leadville. It was a clear, brisk morning and we were chatting and laughing, all in high spirits. But as we spun around a curve in the narrow road, Morgan drove too close to the outer edge; the bank, weakened by a thaw, crumbled, the wheel dropped from the road and the buckboard turned over.

Below the road was a slope which gradually became steeper and steeper until it was a precipice. The buckboard rolled completely over once and half-way again, dragging the frightened, struggling horses after it until two of them broke their harness and got away. Had it not been for a stump on which we lodged, we would have kept right on rolling, and a few yards farther we would have started falling perpendicularly a thousand feet or so to the bottom of the canyon.

Well, after we had stopped with a jolt, we all crawled out—those of us who hadn't been spilled out already—and nobody seemed to be seriously hurt, though the poor devil of a tumbler's nose was mashed almost level with his face. Rose was laughing and soon we all joined her. I admitted that my left shoulder had been sprained a bit, but even before the emergency stage arrived to haul us on to Canyon City, I knew that something more serious had happened. When a doctor examined me, he

found that my collar bone was broken, as well as the arm just below the shoulder.

That was a most inconvenient happening for an acrobatic dancer. It was three weeks before I could work at all, and then I merely sang and danced without the gymnastics. A little later, when my arm was released from the sling, I was able to throw somersaults without touching my hands, but I couldn't do flipflops for months afterwards. To this day my left arm is a little shorter than my right. Barlow, Sanderson & Company, the owners of the stage line—they had formerly operated the Overland Stage across the plains—did what was regarded as the handsome thing by me. They paid my expenses, added a hundred dollars in cash and gave me a lifetime pass over their lines. Inasmuch as the railroads soon drove their lines out of business, that pass has never been of much benefit to me.

As soon as I was able, Jim and I opened at the concert hall at Canyon City, which was operated by a man named Milt Yawberry. Canyon City prided itself on being "citified"—much farther advanced than a mere mining camp, and it was therefore perfectly safe for Yawberry to wear a broadcloth suit, velvet vest, frilled shirt front and white collar. In some towns these would have been un-

gently taken away from him. In addition to these trappings he sported expensive Eastern-made boots and a long black mustache.

But he was none too sweet a character. Our pay was always far in arrears; he claimed his place was losing money, which we didn't believe, for we drew good crowds continuously save on the single day when Cole's circus, the first ever seen in Canyon City, was in town and drew the entire population to its tent. When our engagement with Yawberry was nearly over—we were due in Dodge the following week—we decided that he was going to stall us off until we had to leave town.

"Something's going to be done about this, Eddie," said Jim to me one evening, "and done right away." He didn't explain his remark at the time, but before the evening was over, I found out what he meant. Another actor who was also a creditor of Yawberry's for a considerable amount had discovered a barrel of fine old rye whisky in a place in the rear of the building where it could easily be stolen. He had taken Jim into his confidence, and while the evening performance was on they rolled the barrel out the back way and sold it for enough to come very near settling up what Yawberry owed us.

Yawberry suspected that some of the actors were the culprits. He questioned me closely, pulling his

long mustache and boring into me with his cold, steely eyes. I assured him that I knew no more about the affair than a babe unborn.

"But what about that partner of yours?" he would ask.

"Who? Thompson?" I was astounded. "Why, Mr. Yawberry, Jim Thompson would never do anything like that. I've known that boy for years, and he's absolutely straight. I'd as soon suspect President Hayes of stealing whisky as Jim."

"Huh!" grunted Yawberry with evident skepticism, and turned away. As I look back on it now, I am amazed at the nerve displayed by Thompson and the other fellow in daring to pull such a trick on a man of his type. He had killed one or two men already, and he was not the sort that would hesitate to take direct and violent action whenever it suited his mood to do so. He killed another man in Santa Fé a few years later, and a jury decided that there was something criminal about the affair, so they hung him. Yawberry had always rather fancied himself as a violinist; and to prove that his nerve was unshaken, he called for his fiddle on the scaffold and played "Old Zip Coon" (now known as "Turkey in the Straw") just before the drop was sprung.

XII

WE spent another pleasant and profitable summer with our friends in Dodge City in '79. Some of the events I have already narrated occurred during that second season. In September we left again for Leadville, where this time we were engaged to work at the Theatre Comique, a higher-class concert hall than the one of the year before and minus the gambling feature. Thompson and I had our regular act—which, however, we labored to improve every year—and Rose did a single singing specialty.

The boom at Leadville was now at its height. As California had its Forty-niners, so the Leadville Argonauts are spoken of in local history as Seventy-niners. The town had at least 20,000 population and was still growing like a mushroom. The demand for lodgings was still far greater than the supply and again we found much difficulty in getting located. A handsome new hotel, the Clarendon, had been built, but it was expensive and was always crowded. Incidentally, there was another vaudeville or concert hall, the Coliseum, and Tabor's Opera House was completed that fall, but

found it difficult to secure Eastern attractions.

The turmoil in town seemed to have increased tenfold since the previous winter. Crime and violence had reached such a pitch that it was unsafe to own anything valuable or to go on the streets late at night. Hold-ups were of almost nightly occurrence, and often the victim wasn't even asked to put up his hands, but was slugged from behind and sometimes killed. Robbers broke into people's rooms and shot them or knocked them cold, right in their beds. We actors, when we left the theatre late at night, usually went home in crowds and as everybody else did, walked in the middle of the street. The man who didn't "tote hardware" in self defense, if for no other reason, was a curiosity.

Not only did burglary, sneak thievery, robbery and confidence games flourish, but claim-jumping and lot-jumping had brought the community almost to a state of civil war. Land titles seemed to be in an awful tangle, and disputes between the owners of placer patents and men who claimed title by squatter right were being fought out or carried into the courts almost daily. Taking advantage of these tie-ups, there were desperadoes who seized many a piece of property and held it by force in defiance of both sides. These were often backed by crooked realtors who had paid witnesses ready to swear to anything necessary. City lots were actually grabbed

by these gangs when houses were being erected on them, the workmen driven off the framework knocked down with axes and thrown into the street, and another shack hastily built with new lumber to become a stronghold for the toughs, all of whom were walking arsenals. A bunch of these fellows broke into a small dwelling one night, threw the owner into the street dressed only in his night-clothes, and held possession of the house and furniture. Sometimes they drove owners away by surrounding the house at night and pouring volleys through the windows.

This general lawlessness finally drove the citizens to taking direct and illegal action, and Judge Lynch did a great deal more to correct conditions than the courts of justice had done. One Frodsham, the leader of the lot-jumping gangs, was finally arrested in the fall, but his trial was delayed, and at length a mob took him and a highwayman named Stewart out of jail one night and hung them. There were several other lynchings.

It was there that I had my first view of a lynching in the actual occurrence, and the picture was deeply impressed on my memory. While the show was going on one evening a man who had just come in from the street whispered to me that a mob was just about to take two robbers out of the jail and hang them. I was thrilled with curiosity to see such

a mob in action, and as I had nothing to do on the program for an hour, I hurried out with the thoughtlessness of youth and ran down the street until I saw the crowd coming. There seemed to be no objection to my joining them, and when they rushed into a large empty warehouse or storeroom, I was swept along with them. There was no ceremony, no last words, no delay. Nooses had been made in pieces of heavy, new rope, and ends were thrown over a low beam, men seized them and hauled away, and the doomed victims were drawn, struggling and kicking, off the floor.

But the worst of the affair is yet to be told. A boy of no more than fourteen or fifteen years old had been captured with the robbers and was suspected of having some connection with them. Even so, his youth should have been allowed to plead for him; but the leader of the mob, glancing at him with only momentary hesitation, said, "Bring that fellow along, too," and he was dragged away with the others, screaming and protesting his innocence. His cries and pleadings for mercy, the sight of the rope around his neck, made me regret my urge to witness the affair and I would have given anything to get away, but I was wedged so tightly in the crowd that I could not escape. I could only shut my eyes and at least refuse to see any more.

A few months later the leader of that mob was

himself caught in some crime—I think it was robbery—and hanged; and I was not sorry to hear of it.

One does a lot of idiotic things in youth. If I were offered a chance to see a lynching now, I'd hit the trail in the opposite direction as fast as I could move. In later years I witnessed a legal hanging in the Cook County Jail in Chicago, but only because the sheriff, a friend of mine, had lost his nerve and begged me to stay with him; and as between the lynching and the legal execution, I give you my word that the one is but little more shocking to me than the other. I cannot believe that the average normal human being, if he were to see an execution with his own eyes, would ever thereafter cast a vote for capital punishment.

But to speak of more pleasant things. We had some varied experiences at the Comique that winter. For example, there came to Leadville a man named Sullivan, who made his living by travelling about over the country, staging productions at concert halls of *The Black Crook,* the extravaganza which had created such a sensation in the East with its full-length tights ten years before. He had a few of the costumes which went with the show, and the rest were supplied by the local company. The manager of the Comique signed up with him for a two-weeks' production, and of course we

actors, tumblers, contortionists, and what not all had a part of some kind or other. The ballet—numbering about fifteen—consisted mostly of waitresses and dance hall girls, tall and short, fat and lean, and the fit or rather the misfit of their tights was a sight to behold, though their dancing was perhaps even more startling. The "gorgeous, scintillating spectacle" seen in New York was a rather pale imitation in the mining camp honkytonks.

It must have been considerable of a strain on Sullivan's nerves to try to put over a show like that against all the obstacles with which he had to contend, and without having it so rotten that it would be hooted off the stage. He was near apoplexy several times during the run at our house, and particularly on the first night or two. Our rehearsals had necessarily been sketchy, of course, and many of the performers were not accustomed to playing dramatic parts. I played Rudolf, the hero of the piece, while Sullivan essayed the part of the heavy. On the first night there had already been several hitches and miscues when we reached the point where Sullivan and I were in dialogue. He was supposed to answer a speech of mine with "Well said, me lad, well said!" But I mistook my cue and cut in on him several phrases ahead of time. He swelled visibly and his face turned purple under his makeup. Finally he ejaculated, "Well

said, me lad, but said too damn soon!" It got a big laugh from the audience, and I am convinced that most of them thought that line was in the script.

Charles Vivian, the founder of the Elks, came to Leadville that winter and played at our theatre. Vivian was an English singing actor who came to America about the first of the year 1868. He had been a member of a little club of actors over in London called The Jolly Corks, and soon after he reached New York, being a likable, convivial fellow, he organized a similar club among his new actor friends in that city. Very shortly afterwards the charter members changed the name of the club to the Elks. The organization became a prominent one and presently began to throw out branches, and so a great order was founded.

Vivian was the first to play Sir Joseph Porter in *Pinafore* in this country. That was in 1878. Soon afterwards he started West with an opera organization, but the company stranded at Denver, and Vivian and his wife were compelled to shift for themselves. Quite naturally the boom drew them to Leadville. Vivian's first effort there was to be a producer on his own. He rented a hall and began presenting a sort of tabloid version of *Oliver Twist,* with his wife as Oliver, himself as the Artful Dodger, and eight or ten other parts presented with considerable doubling by about half that

number of cheap "hams" or amateurs such as he could afford. When he and his wife arrived in Leadville they encountered the usual difficulty in finding a place to sleep, and I suggested that until he could find a room, Mrs. Vivian might stay with Rose, while he and I bunked on the concert hall stage, as I had done the previous winter. So again we procured the little straw mattresses and he and I spent several nights there.

But although he put plenty of blood and villainy into his show, the miners didn't take to it, and he was compelled to close after a short run, with considerable financial loss. He then went into the concert halls and did well, for he was an excellent monologist and singer and could give a whole program single-handed. His favorite song, the one by which he is best remembered by the old-timers, was "Ten Thousand Miles Away."

Later in the winter pneumonia raged in the town in what seemed to be almost epidemic form, and poor Vivian contracted the disease and died of it. With all her modern improvements, Leadville had not yet acquired a hearse; she was too busy with the living to give any thought to the dead. So Vivian's casket was hauled to the raw, ugly little cemetery just outside of town in an ordinary express wagon. The concert halls put on a big benefit performance for his wife, in which



CHARLES VIVIAN, FOUNDER OF THE ELKS



JOHN L. CARNCROSS

we all took part. Several hundred dollars were raised, with which she went back East and may have gone to England; I never heard of her again. Vivian lay in the cemetery at Leadville for two years, his grave marked—like many others—only with the piece of plank on which his name was scrawled. Then the Elks' lodges, which were becoming numerous throughout the country, became cognizant of the matter, and they removed his body to Boston, where it was placed under a handsome monument.

We closed our second season at Leadville in the spring of 1880 and followed it up with short engagements at Georgetown and Golden, then hopeful little mining camps. At Georgetown I asked the proprietor of the concert hall who he had on the bill, and he told me with some pride that among other stars, William Devere and his wife, Ella Arnold, were booked. Devere, widely known in the profession as Big Bill, was a unique character. He had a great, beefy, powerful body, and was a bad man to stir up. He had travelled for a while with John Robinson's Circus, doing a turn in the concert. At some little town down in Texas, the audience tried to clean out the show, and in the "Hey, Rube" battle which followed, Devere, swinging no other weapon than a steel-rimmed banjo, killed two cowboys with it.

The Deveres reached Georgetown that day in rather unusual fashion for actors; they came riding on burros over the rough, snowy roads across the mountains from Fairplay, and with no other baggage than a very small bag apiece. Evidently they were about down to hard pan. They had stopped overnight at a hospitable cabin on the way, but were about tuckered out when they reached Georgetown.

The manager asked Devere a bit uneasily about their wardrobe. "Oh, that's all right," said Bill. "We've got it—plenty of it." No one could guess where.

That night in the Grand Minstrel Opening, Devere was to be Interlocutor—which of course called for evening dress—while I was on the end, wearing one of my comic minstrel costumes. Jim and I had by that time built up a pretty fine wardrobe. I didn't see Devere that evening until just as we took our places on the stage. Then my eyes popped with astonishment. He had borrowed or stolen a dress coat from someone smaller than himself—for men as large as he were not common. He seemed about to burst out of it at the back and shoulders, and the sleeves covered his arms to a point about half way between his elbows and his wrists. He wore a false shirt-front cut out of cardboard. I did not recognize my dress vest, but he

had it on. He had sneaked it out of my trunk, split it up the back seam and pinned the two halves to his shirt. He had filched a pair of trousers from somebody else, and was bursting the buttons off them. When it became necessary for me to wear my vest later in the evening, Rose had to fasten it up the back with safety pins. Mad? Of course I was! But what good did it do? Every time I looked at Devere and clenched my fists, I thought of those two cowboys down in Texas.

XIII

DENVER at that time was a flourishing young frontier city of thirty or thirty-five thousand population (though of course claiming more), and Thompson and I, seeking new and more metropolitan fields, decided to try for an engagment there after we left Golden. We found the programs full at the established concert halls, but we learned that a man named Chase was opening a new house, and we looked him up.

"Yes, I'm starting a concert hall and sporting resort," said he. "What salary do you want?"

"We'll start at twenty-five a week apiece," said I. "That is including my wife, who works single. You know about us, I guess."

"Sure I know about you," he replied. "I've seen you all in Leadville, and I'd like to have you. But I'll be frank with you. I've got just four hundred dollars capital. If my place is a go, I'll pay you. If I lose, I won't. Are you willing to gamble with me?"

There was something likable about his frankness. Jim and I looked at each other. I drew a quarter from my pocket and held it between thumb

and finger. "Heads!" said Jim. I spun it in the air, caught it between the palms and lifted one hand. It was heads.

"Yes, we'll take a chance with you," said I; and by the way, we didn't regret it. Chase's establishment made money from the start, and he was always on the square with us. I am sorry I cannot speak as favorably for his gambling room—which of course was what he meant by "sporting resort"; that was the elegant term for it in those days. There were fifty-two games of chance in his place, and a sucker couldn't win a dollar at any of them. Chase in later years started a lottery and made a fortune.

His resort was at Fifteenth and Blake Streets, and consisted of two large upstairs rooms, connected by doors cut through the intervening wall. The concert hall, which he called "The Palace," was over a feed store, and the gambling games were in the adjoining room. In the concert hall the second and third stories had been thrown together, which gave a higher ceiling and allowed for the inevitable horseshoe tier of upstairs boxes. Just a block away was the little stream called Cherry Creek, which was the terror of Denver in those days. Every spring when the snow melted in the mountains, it ran wild, tore away all the bridges over it and spread over several blocks of

territory. In the last days of our stay—for we were in Denver the better part of a year—the creek got so high that it touched the first story of our building and threatened to stop our business, but at that point consented to recede.

Denver prided itself on being one of the snappiest and most up to date cities in the country. Several years before, when it was a mere mining camp, it had gained renown as the place where a man committed a murder, was arrested, legally tried by jury, condemned and executed, all on the same day. Now it was adopting all the modern improvements as fast as they came out. It was there that I saw my first incandescent electric light, there that I first saw and used the telephone, both having been installed in the city just that year of my arrival. The telephone as a practical instrument was scarcely three years old, and the electric light had just been invented by Edison, Denver being, I believe, among the first half dozen cities in the country to put it into use. The five-story Tabor Block was just being completed upon my arrival, and for years afterward was the pride of the city. One of its features most often spoken of was the elevator to lift you to the upper floors—not a swift electric elevator like those of today, but one which operated at a snail's pace and was operated by pulling on a cable. Thousands of people visited the build-

ing just to ride on that elevator. If I remember rightly, I was one of them.

Our friend Big Bill Devere appeared in Denver that summer and fall, and distinguished himself by taking in the town one night in a hack, winding up about daybreak by stealing the hackman's overcoat. How this could happen I don't know, unless the hackman was drunker than he was. Anyhow, the Jehu had him arrested, and when I heard of it, I went around to court to see what happened.

They had a judge in Denver in those days who was a scourge to those whose feet strayed even momentarily from the path of virtue. From what I've heard of that judge in Richmond who was the original of Walter Kelly's "Virginia Judge," he must have been a genial philanthropist as compared with the Colorado terror. It was an axiom in Denver that if you came up before Judge W——, you were inevitably doomed to lose money or break rock, and usually both. He'd said "A hundred dollars and six months" so often that he muttered it in his sleep.

It was into this stern tribunal that Bill Devere was brought for trial. The court at that time was being held for some reason in a vacant storeroom. The audience was composed largely of miners, teamsters and such odds and ends of Denver humanity as had nothing else to do at the moment.

The grist was small that morning, and as the complaining hackman had been delayed in reaching the court, Bill's case was put last on the docket. Even then the chief witness hadn't put in an appearance, but a policeman assured the Court that he would be here at any moment now, so the judge, unwilling to let any prisoner go for mere lack of evidence, agreed to wait for him, and began glancing over the morning paper.

It was then that Bill Devere arose and said very deferentially, even humbly, "Your Honor, while we are waiting, may I beguile the time for the audience by reciting a few lines of poetry?"

The judge, startled, peered sourly over his glasses at Bill. Plainly he didn't know what to make of the request. But there was evidently in his mind some secret curiosity to see what Devere might be going to do, perhaps a secret readiness for a little diversion, for after a calculating scrutiny of the culprit, he snapped, "All right; go ahead!"

At that, Bill began in a voice that quivered with emotion:

"Over the hill to the poorhouse I'm trudgin' my weary way—
I, a woman of seventy and only a trifle gray—"

—And thence he recited the poem through with a pathos which he knew would simply melt his

audience to a soft paste. He had pulled out the tremolo stop to its full length, and put a sob into every line; and how it did work on them! When he faltered through the last stanza—

"Over the hill to the poorhouse, my childern dear, good-bye!
Many a night I've watched you when only God was nigh—"

—Every roughneck in the room was weeping copiously. Thence Bill switched into the sequel, "Over the Hill from the Poorhouse," in which the reprobate son comes back from the West and rescues his mother from the poor farm, whither her hypocritical, well-to-do children had shunted her. He put a sly significance into the lines—

"My fiery nags was black as coal;
(They some'at resembled the horse I stole)"—

—And when he straightened up and with beatified countenance spoke the last few lines in a clear, ringing voice—

"But I've learned one thing; an' it cheers a man
In always doin' the best he can;
That whether on the Big Book, a blot
Gets over a fellow's name or not,
Whenever he does a deed that's white,
It's credited to him fair and right.
An' when you hear the great bugle's notes,
An' the Lord divides his sheep an' goats;
However they may settle my case,
Wherever they may fix my place,
My good old Christian mother, you'll see,
Will be sure to stand right up for me."—

—Every male in the courtroom felt himself uplifted and firmly resolved to lead a better life.

For a moment after Bill closed, there was silence, broken only by the snuffling and blowing of noses from the numerous repentant sinners. Then the judge suddenly slammed his newspaper down on his desk and barked, "What the hell's this case about? Where's the complainant?"

"Well, the complainant ain't here yet, your Honor," a policeman began, hesitatingly.

"Why ain't he here? Defendant dismissed!" roared the judge. "We can't set around here all day, waitin' for him."

Within five minutes I saw Devere sitting on the bench beside the judge, swapping yarns with him; and the next thing I heard was that they had been drunk together for three solid days. Such are the occasional rewards of Art.

Our stay in Denver was noteworthy also because it was there that my partner Thompson was married, his bride being an actress named Millie Thomas. The four of us thereafter formed a very congenial quartet and had many jolly hours together.

There were some stirring times in Denver in the fall of 1880. Readers who remember those days will recall that there was a strong anti-Chinese agitation throughout the country in the latter Sev-

enties, particularly in the West, where the Chinese had been settling in considerable numbers for several years, and where they were giving the white laboring man no little worry because of their willingness to work for a few cents a day. Chinese coolies had done much of the heavy work of building the Central Pacific Railroad over the Sierras in the latter Sixties, and Chinese had picked up some small fortunes around mining camps by working over the "tailings" or refuse heaps which the white miners considered beneath their notice. In 1877 Dennis Kearney began his "Sand Lot" agitation against the yellow men in San Francisco, ending every fiery speech with the words, "The Chinese must go!" which became a slogan throughout the West.

The matter was even dragged into the Presidential campaign of 1880 when the fake "Morey letter" represented Garfield as advocating the continued importation of Chinese labor by this country. This letter was the cause of many rows and knockdowns in Denver before it was finally proven to be a forgery.

There were over two hundred Chinese in Denver, many of them engaged in the favorite Celestial occupation of washing clothes, while others did common labor. The town's problem did not appear to be a very grave one, but many citizens were



ROSE HOWLAND, THE FIRST MRS. FOY

much exercised over it. On Saturday, October 30th, there was a big political parade in which many of the banners and transparencies referred to the question. "No Chinese Cheap Labor" and "The Chinese Must Go" were two of the favorite sentiments. To some workingmen as well as to many who studiously avoided work, the Chinese question was more important than the Presidential race.

On Sunday about noon a clash occurred in the slum district between a Chinaman and a white man. There were two or three versions of it given afterwards. One was that a white man had refused to pay a Chinaman for his laundry work, and in the row which followed the Mongolian took a shot at his customer. The other was that some roughs had interfered with two Chinese who were playing a game of pool, that one Chinaman had been bashed over the head with a cue and had thereupon fired at his assailant. Anyhow, the white man wasn't even wounded; but a rumor quickly spread over the city that a Caucasian gentleman had been assassinated by a Chink, and riot soon broke loose.

At first the mob did little but tear down Chinese laundry signs and smash their windows; but soon it became more infuriated, and began tearing down the buildings themselves and hunting the

yellow men with intent to kill. A fellow actor of mine at the Palace was one of the leaders in this work. The city police were so few that they could do nothing whatsoever with the crowd. The fire department turned the hose on the mob at Sixteenth and Wazee Streets, but the hose was soon cut and the fire company overwhelmed and driven off.

As usual, I was hovering on the outskirts, watching the proceedings, much to my wife's alarm. The disorders continued throughout the afternoon, and until far into the night. It was astounding how deftly the Chinese escaped from the city or hid themselves in cellars or other nooks and corners, often being concealed by sympathizing white people. Jim Moon, keeper of a gambling house, gave refuge to four or five of them in the very face of the mob, slammed and barricaded his doors, and standing guard, assisted by only two or three employes with shotguns, defied the rioters to do their worst——which, by the way, they didn't do. A few weeks later Moon was murdered in a restaurant while I was standing just outside the door, talking to a friend.

Several Chinese were badly beaten, but only one was killed. A great uproar was going on in Seventeenth Street directly in front of the Markham Hotel when I stopped to look on. I saw a man

climb a telegraph pole and throw a rope over a cross-arm. The crowd below began to pull, and quickly a body rose in the air, clad in a flapping black silk shirt and white trousers. It was an old, old Chinaman, seventy or eighty years of age—the only one who gave his life on that turbulent day.

During the night an ex-sheriff, a man of great influence, was called to the aid of the city, and organized a posse of one hundred to keep order. There was much fear that Tuesday, which was the first of November and National election day, would be the occasion for more outbreaks, but the town was so well policed by that time that there was no more trouble.

On election night meagre telegraphic reports were received from time to time and read at our place, but there was little "sitting up to hear the returns" in those days, because so many States were still largely rural that the returns came in very slowly. Furthermore, Garfield and Hancock divided the popular vote pretty evenly that year, and two or three days passed before we Democrats would admit that Garfield had been elected.

We left Denver early in 1881, having received an order from the Adelphi variety theatre in San Francisco—which indicated that our reputation was spreading pretty widely over the West. We were delighted at the prospect of a season in

Frisco, the gay, gilded metropolis of the Golden State, the city which everyone longed to see at least once in his life. But just before making our engagement there, we had received a call from another and a rather famous little town; famous partly because of its name, which alone was sufficient to give it a grisly reputation—Tombstone, Arizona. So on leaving Denver, we went down to Tombstone and played an engagement of four weeks before going on to San Francisco.

Tombstone was a silver mining camp, and had the reputation, though I don't know how just it was, of being one of the most wide-open towns in the West. As far as my own opinion is of any value, I cannot say that I found things any more free and easy there than at Leadville in its earlier days or at Butte later on. It was a rather wild-eyed little town, I must admit, though so much like other mining camps that the things I remember best about it are its climate and surroundings—heat, desert, dust, cactus, the sun always glaring from a clear sky and in all directions those distant, jagged blue mountains on the horizon—rough in outline, but the only restful, beautiful things in sight.

The name of the town is said to have been suggested by a remark made to a prospector who was just starting for that vicinity, and who remarked

to a friend that he believed he would find gold-bearing ore there. The Apaches were very active in those parts at the time, which led the friend to retort, "You are more likely to find your tombstone!" From that time on, funereal names were much in favor thereabouts. The first claim located at the spot was named the Graveyard, and the leading newspaper of the town at the time of our visit was the *Epitaph.*

Our engagement was at a concert hall known as the Bird Cage Varieties; why they didn't call it the Coffin I don't know. We seemed to make good, and could have stayed longer. Incidentally, let me say that I was never shot at nor made the target for eggs or cabbage by dissatisfied patrons in those mining camp honkytonks, nor did I ever see another actor suffer such indignity. It is true that the audience sometimes expressed its approval or disapproval rather emphatically, but I never saw any violence offered save by some fellow who was drunk and irresponsible.

It is startling to me now to think of the friendships which I, a generally peaceable man, acquired as an actor among western gunfighters, gamblers, miners, desperado hunters and others more or less hard-boiled, some of them with cold steel nerves, granite hearted, ready to kill upon a moment's

offense or suspicion. The stage had a glamor and a fascination for all of them. Some few of them, I think, had a sort of vague idea that a comedian was a devilish jolly, care-free, irresponsible fellow whose private life was as merry as his stage antics, who never meant anybody any harm, never meant seriously anything he said, and was not to be held to strict accountability. Some liked me because I made them laugh and forget for a few moments the strain and ugliness of their lives. A few, like Bat Masterson, came near, I think, to knowing me as I really was.

There was a man named Rudebaugh, for example, who ran a gambling house in Tombstone, and who was an ardent admirer of mine. He was at the Bird Cage one evening, laughing at our songs and jokes, when word was brought to him that a man named Kelly, a suspected cattle rustler and general bad egg, was in his place down the street with several drinks aboard, and was making trouble for his faro dealer. Rudebaugh promptly left the show and hurried down to his resort. Entering quietly, he strolled over to the faro game, and after looking on for a moment, said to the youthful dealer in a casual way, "I'll deal for a while, Harry. You go over and start that hieronymous game."

He sat down and began drawing out the cards. Kelly was losing consistently; possibly he lost even more rapidly after Rudebaugh assumed the deal. He cursed his luck, the house, and the faro box in turn. Finally there were only three cards left in the box. Leaning forward and shaking his finger at Rudebaugh with his half-drunken solemnity, Kelly said, "Listen, old Frozen-face, if you make one crooked motion on them last three cards, I'll blow your — — head off!"

That was the final insult. Rudebaugh had his answer ready. Like the dart of a ray of light, he whipped out his huge pistol and shot Kelly squarely through the forehead, spattering his brains on the wall behind him. Then sheathing his gun, he stepped around the table, picked up the body of the bad man, and while the startled crowd looked on in an awed, tense silence, he carried it out through the front door and heaved it clean over the horse-trough into the street. Returning, he stopped just inside the door, and looking around, remarked in an even tone to the assemblage in general:

"I'll keep order here, even if the place don't make a — — cent!"

That was his only apology for or explanation of the incident, and so far as I know, none other

was ever demanded of him. As far as Tombstone was concerned, the demise of Kelly meant a good riddance. But think of having the friendship of such a man! It seemed to me to have somewhat the aspect of getting chummy with a healthy, vigorous, partly tamed tiger.

XIV

SAN FRANCISCO! The bizarre, the care-free, the city of all nations, the richest, merriest city on the continent, the nearest to a true Bohemia that America has ever seen. The devil-may-care jollity of the old mining camps still pervaded its atmosphere, which was colored on the other hand by the attempts of its new-made but already swollen plutocrats to ape—yes, to surpass the splendors of New York, of Paris, even of ancient Rome. Over at Virginia City the Comstock was still pouring out its millions, though in slightly lessening degree, and San Francisco was its great financial headquarters. The city swarmed with gold millionaires, silver millionaires, Pacific Railroad millionaires, millionaires made by sugar and goodness knows what not. You couldn't have tossed a stone into the gorgeous lobby of the great Palace Hotel without hitting at least two or three of them. Nob Hill was covered with their residences, with the enormous medieval castle of Mark Hopkins towering over them all. Any day a man who knew them could point out to you on the street Mackay, Fair, Flood, Sharon, Huntington, Stanford, Hopkins,

one of the Crockers, Spreckels or Sutro. Already snobbery was arising in San Francisco. With some folks it was coming to be a test of your social status to know whether you came from north or south of the slot—meaning the cable line on Market Street. North of it was aristocracy; south of it the rabble. But the majority in Frisco cared nothing for that. In spirit they were still the jolly old Bohemian crowd of the mining camps.

The millionaires set the standard of living, however, and all of us tried to come up to it. In spite of the fact that food could be bought in San Francisco as cheaply as anywhere on the continent, most people contrived to live extravagantly. You could go to Italian restaurants like Campi's on Clay Street, whose history ran back to the golden days of '49, and get an excellent table d'hote dinner with a pint of wine for fifty cents. The floor was sanded, the tablecloths not always clean, but the cooking was excellent and there you met everyone —saints and sinners, millionaires and mendicants, capitalists, courtesans and clerks.

The saloons were favorite eating places. There were two classes among the leading ones—the "one-bit" and the "two-bit" kind which served a regular square meal. At the two-bit saloon any drink was a quarter, but you got all you wanted to eat with it, and the menu embraced such things as

turtle soup, roast pig, lamb or chicken, whole broiled salmon, potatoes, tomatoes, cheese, crackers, pickles and relishes. No matter whether you bought whisky, wine, beer, a cigar or a package of cigarettes, the price was a quarter, and the lunch went with it. At the one-bit saloons the price was fifteen cents and the lunch was not so good nor so varied, but enough to keep a man full and fit.

The enormous wealth in the hands of a few in San Francisco had bred socialism, as it always does. The "sand lot" agitation was a symptom, and Dennis Kearney, its leader, came near being elected Mayor at one time. His power had waned a little when I arrived, but there were still many "sand-lotters" in the city. Frisco also had its toughs and gangsters. Not everyone knows, perhaps, that the word "hoodlum" originated in that city. Regular gang organizations grew up among the hoodlums, and they could have given pointers to New York's Dead Rabbits or Hudson Dusters. Their leading occupations were robbery and theft, and their favorite outdoor sports—speaking especially of the younger ones—were pulling Chinese queues and bouncing brickbats and boulders off of Celestial skulls.

Thompson and I played at the Adelphi Theatre, at the corner of California and Kearney Streets, where Ed Buckley was running a high-class variety

show. The program, like that of the commoner concert halls, lasted several hours. It opened with the inevitable minstrel first part, then came the olio and finally the full-length play. Drinks were of course served on the floor; you couldn't run a theatrical enterprise in Frisco then without them. Why, even in the highest class theatres and opera houses, the elite had champagne sent into their boxes from the bar which was a part of every theatre building, and sipped it between acts.

For its play the Adelphi had no cheap, risqué affair written on the spot by one of the actors or house staff, but a melodrama selected from what was then classed as the legitimate. Soon after our arrival, no less a person than Dionysius Lardner Boucicault himself came for an engagement at our place, directing and acting in his own plays. It was there that I first acted in the "legitimate." My first part was that of Mr. Corrigan in *The Colleen Bawn*. Three or four years later a newspaper writer estimated that Boucicault had earned from that play—which had then been on the boards about twenty-five years—fully $200,000. I continued to take part week after week in the play, and acted with Boucicault in *Arrah-na-Pogue, The Octoroon, Old Heads and Young Hearts* and two or three others of his dramas.

Boucicault at that time was nearing sixty but

looked younger, and still had all the fire and vivacity of youth. It did not seem possible that it had been nearly forty years since he wrote *London Assurance*. He was a vigorous stage director, impatient with stupidity and a wielder of very pointed sarcasm when an actor persistently missed his point. He called everybody "my dear" at rehearsals, but there were many times—oh, how many!—when he didn't mean it.

When Boucicault was not with us we played not only his but many other old melodramas; *Out at Sea, Rick, or the Ocean Waif, The Ticket-of-Leave Man, Life's Revenge, The Sea of Ice* and so on, all of them strenuous (but not morbid), all of them full of hideous machinations by the villain or villains, who were, however, invariably "foiled" in the end. People liked plays full of action and highly spiced with treason, stratagem, and danger. Producers strove for thrilling effects—a fire scene, a mill scene, an ocean scene, a convict ship, a lighthouse interior with the revolving lamp. Programs of those days usually gave a title or catch line to each act. For instance, the list of scene locations in the program of Boucicault's drama *The Streets of New York* ran as follows:

Prologue. Bloodgood's Banking House. "Take up your end." Act I. Mrs. Fairweather's Apartments. "I could not help it."

Act. II. Parlor of Bloodgood's House. "I left that receipt at home."
Act III. Union Square by moonlight. "Matches five cents a bunch."
Act. IV. Five Points; Badger's Lodgings. "Jeems, snuff the gas."
Act. V. THE GREAT FIRE SCENE. This is the most realistic scene ever produced on any stage.
Act VI. Parlor in Bloodgood's House. "Not yet, Gid. We want you."

Sometimes the program went farther than this, and hinted at the outline of the story in each act. Thus the program schedules an act of Boucicault's play *The Jilt*:

Act I

Budleigh Abbotts in Yorkshire, country seat of Sir Budleigh Woodstock. Bringing Home the Bride. Shadow on the Porch. Nemesis. The Love Letters of the Jilt meet the Bride. Geoff in a Mess. Referee, the great Racing Prophet, visits the Abbotts. Myles O'Hara meets his Fate.

And characters in the same play were set before you thus:

MYLES O'HARA MR. DION BOUCICAULT
Of Ballinahinch, County Galway, a gentleman rider, prophet of the turf, writing in the "Sporting World" under the signature of "Referee."

Perhaps the intent of this was to obviate so much verbal explanation on the part of the actors during the play. It certainly didn't leave much to strain the wits of the audience.

Probably the most famous catch line ever written was that which labelled Act I of Milton Noble's old blood-and-thunder melodrama, *The Phoenix* —"And the villain still pursued her." That line was a byword and a standing joke both in and out of the profession for thirty years or more.

Jim and I were at the Adelphi all summer and a portion of the following winter—though to mention summer and winter in San Francisco is only a manner of speaking, for the temperature is nearly the same the year round. Like all other newcomers to the town, we were chilled at first by the 55-degree temperature and the frequent fogs, but we presently became accustomed to wearing semi-winter clothing all the time and began to like it. There were so many other things to endear old Frisco to light-hearted people like ourselves that the climate became a secondary matter, anyhow.

In February, '82, we received an offer of an engagement with Emerson's Minstrels—yes, from the great Billy Emerson himself, who had so thrilled me in Chicago nearly fifteen years before. He had now reached even higher eminence in his profession; he had been to Australia and other foregin shores and aroused much enthusiasm, and at the time of his offer to us was located for a long stay in San Francisco, having leased the Standard Theatre on Bush Street.

Emerson was one of the great geniuses of the blackface art. He had so handsome and intellectual a face that it seemed a pity to cover it with burnt cork. He was graceful, versatile and had a voice of real opera quality. Some of the songs he was singing in the latter Seventies and Eighties, such as "Moriarity," "Just as Happy as a Big Sunflower," and "Morning by the Bright Light," became leading hits of the period.

He had surrounded himself with a fine company at the Standard. In his opening he had no less than six end men. A program which I have, dated April 3d, gives these as Emerson himself, Charlie Reed, Pete Mack, Burt Haverly, Gus Bruno and J. H. Love. Chauncey Olcott was a member of the company, singing ballads of course in that clear, sweet tenor of his. "Little Wife Nellie" was the song he used during that week of April 3d. Tom Dixon, another noted tenor of the day, was singing there, as were H. W. Frillman and W. F. Bishop, bassos and other excellent vocalists. The orchestral accomplishments to songs in Emerson's shows were ideal, in my opinion. The conductor did not drown the singer entirely with a boiler-shop noise effect, as they so often do nowadays where they have big orchestras. I often wonder how grand opera singers make their vocal organs last as long as they do. One little human voice trying to fight against

seventy-five or eighty strings, wood-winds, brasses, kettledrums and traps, isn't my idea of fair play. In Emerson's shows the accompaniment was properly subordinated; it was a soft, liquid background, if I may so call it, of flute, harp and a few stringed instruments. He liked the idea, too, of singing the chorus of a song rather forte and then repeating it pianissimo.

Emerson's show lasted exactly two hours. The program bore the announcement, "Curtain rises precisely at 8 o'clock." (And it did, too.) "Carriages ordered at 10 o'clock." Prices were 50 and 75 cents; matinees 25 and 50 cents. You could reserve a seat if you so desired without extra cost; otherwise the seat remained open to the first comer. Some of these ideas of course were not peculiar to Emerson's theatre, but were found in many other playhouses of the time. I merely mention them in connection with the Standard as a hint of the great changes that have taken place in forty-five years.

Our theatre was in the very midst of San Francisco's Rialto, which centered on Bush Street, overflowing into Market, Kearney, and other cross streets. The afternoon parade of beauty and fashion on Market and Kearney, especially on Saturdays, was worth going miles to see. Everybody put on his or her—mostly her—best bib and tucker and strolled; stopping now and again for refreshments

or to chat with friends, then strolling some more.

The Thompsons and the Foys were frequently among the strollers. We had some jolly times that year—dining at Campi's, the Poodle Dog, Marchand's or some other of the Bohemian restaurants, lounging in the lobby and parlors of the gorgeous Palace Hotel—then one of the wonders of America—wandering through Chinatown, drinking tea from lacquered tables and buying useless trinkets, through Portsmouth Square, the forum of the sandlotters where Kearney made his fiery speeches, slumming (by daylight) along the Barbary Coast, where every other building was a dive or a dance hall worse than any we had ever seen, jaunting out to the Presidio or to the Cliff House to see the seals, climbing Nob Hill (over streets so steep that they were grass grown) to see the millionaires' homes, occasionally joining one of the picnic parties which marched down Market Street to the ferry station led by an oompah-oompah brass band to take a boat to San Rafael, Sausalito, Vallejo, Benicia or some other jolly place across the bay. One may consider a great deal of life's misfortune and unhappiness counterbalanced if one has had the joy of knowing the old San Francisco.

Jim and I were billed on Emerson's posters as the "Monarch Refined, Artistic Ethiopian Eccentrics." We stayed with his show more than three

months and might have been there longer had we not been smitten with an ambition to be producers on our own. Almost every actor suffers from attacks of this kind at intervals, and once in a while some actor really gets away with the trick and becomes a Cohan or a Belasco. Our temptation came through Gus Bruno, also of Emerson's company, who was offered what he called an "opportunity," and forthwith came down with a bad case of managerial aspirations. Charlie Reed, a clever comedian who had recently come from the East to join the Emerson organization, had a script of an Irish farce named *Muldoon's Picnic* which had made a great hit in the East—one of the old green-whiskered variety which had many successors during the following twenty-five years. Bruno was very eager for us to combine with him, buy the script and produce the show up and down the Coast, and Jim and I fell for the scheme. I don't know whether Charlie's title to the producing rights of the play was unassailable or not, but we bought it from him for twenty-five dollars.

Gus Bruno, by the way, was a clever chap and worth a paragraph of his own. He was a Dane, and had started out in early youth as a circus acrobat and contortionist in Copenhagen. About 1870 he came to this country and appeared in the varieties as "The Limber Boy." But he was a clever com-

edian and especially strong on various dialects, and his athletic stuff soon became secondary. He was the first to introduce the Swedish and Dutch broken English on the American stage. When he tried Irish dialect, he was almost equally good. He was one of the most confirmed practical jokers I ever saw. A favorite stunt of his was to throw a fit on the street, perhaps right across the street car tracks, and sometimes allow himself to be carted off to a hospital before revealing that his attack was a fake. A "sell" like that was widely discussed and laughed at in those days, and incidentally, Gus got a lot of publicity out of it.

Anyone who has heard the oft-told story of the two Irishmen, Mike and Pat, will not be surprised to learn that two Hibernian cronies were the leading characters in our comedy. It was decided that Bruno and I were the men for these parts, so Bruno played Muldoon, while I essayed Mulcahy. Thompson played three or four parts, and our three wives, doubling wherever necessary, rounded out a well-balanced company.

We soon began to get a hint of the worries of the producing manager. Our investment in costumes and properties was not large, but the advance man's salary and expenses, some necessary posters and dodgers and our own travelling expenses at the start ate up money rapidly. Bruno put up one half

of the capital, and Jim and I the other half.

With high hopes we went trouping up and down the State, playing such towns as Oroville, Nevada City, Auburn, Marysville, Redbluff, Placerville, Stockton, Fresno and so on, wherever there was an "opry house" or a hall with a semblance of a stage in it. At one place we visited, one man was the principal storekeeper, pharmacist, undertaker, postmaster, manager of the theatre (it was in his store) and with his fiddle was one half of the orchestra, his daughter with her piano being the other half. And for this village Poo-Bah we had to give a full rehearsal of our play in the afternoon, in order that he and his daughter might practise the three or four songs in the show and learn their cues.

Some of the towns we visited had been prosperous mining camps in the Fifties, Sixties and Seventies, but were now fading. Gold mines are mostly short-lived. We saw Angels Camp, Dutch Flat, Sutter Creek, the Stanislaus River, the Mokelumne and other spots whose names were made immortal by Bret Harte. Again and again we came upon the remains of old mine workings—caved-in prospect holes, the mouths of tunnels gaping in the sides of lonely gulches, masses of rotting framework, old flumes now dry or with the water pouring from their broken sides, and now and then

in the vicinity of such ruins we found the ghosts of dead mining camps—huddles of deserted cabins, a vacant store or two and a few solemn, bearded men still haunting the spot, either too poor to get away or still unable to believe that the glory of the once-thriving camp had departed. Some of them were still prospecting. "She'll come back yet," they would maintain, stubbornly. "The ore in this district ain't all exhausted, not by a jugful. You'll see!"

Of course we didn't show in towns like these; but in some places where there was apparently a tolerably full complement of citizens, money seemed to be scarce. Now and again in more prosperous places we drew a full house, but on several occasions we played to sums as low as $8, $19 and $24. We didn't always heed our advance man's bookings. Sometimes we were behind his schedule, sometimes we jumped over a date or two and got ahead of it. On one or two occasions we came near getting in front of the advance man himself.

There was one more character necessary to the company, as anyone old enough to have seen *Muldoon's Picnic* will remember, and that was a donkey. For this role we secured an ordinary Rocky Mountain burro. Transportation for Jack was one of our constant worries. If we were travelling by train, he could be shipped in the express car, but

when we went by stage, as was frequently necessary to reach out of the way towns, we had to scheme variously. Occasionally, when the distance wasn't too great, we could bribe the driver to go slowly while we led Jack behind the stage. At other times he was led or ridden by some chance hireling or even hauled in a wagon.

Getting him upstairs to the hall was another job which Thompson and I found too much for our nerves. Gus Bruno was the only one whom he chose to obey to the letter. I got him about two-thirds of the way up a long flight of stairs one evening when he balked, and in the ensuing argument, he and I fell together the entire distance to the bottom, he being on top most of the way—at least such was my impression. After the landscape had ceased revolving around me and I recovered my power of speech, I told Gus that if the brute appeared at all in the show that evening, somebody else would have to tow him upstairs. Whereupon Gus simply laid hold of Jack's halter and clucked, and the donkey tripped up the steps with him as docile as any lap-dog.

We came to Marysville one bright day, and though we had been advertised in advance and though we distributed some hundreds of dodgers immediately upon our arrival, the house that night amounted to just a trifle over thirty dollars. But

after the performance an enthusiastic patron came to us at the hotel and said, "Folks, that was the funniest show I ever seen! Too bad this town didn't reelize just how funny it was goin' to be, or they'd all been there to-night. Listen, why don't you stay over another night? Get out some handbills in the mornin' and everybody that was there to-night'll boost for you. I'll talk it all over town myself, and they'll pack the house. Trouble is, they jest don't reelize how good the show's goin' to be till you're gone. You do like I tell you, and you'll have 'em trompin' each other under foot to get in to-morrow evenin'."

We couldn't resist his enthusiasm. We saw clearly now that the real reason why we were not succeeding was that we stayed only one night in each town. The second night was bound to be a riot. So we agreed to stay over. Our advance man was getting used to that sort of thing, and wouldn't mind it much.

While we were busily distributing our handbills next morning a train rolled in, and who should step off but my old friend Sam Bigley, of my circus and minstrel days in Illinois. Ignoring the slightly strained manner in which we had parted six years before, he greeted me effusively with several "Well! Well! Wells!" and we swapped reminiscences for a few minutes. He informed me that

in passing to and fro in California he had heard of our troupe, and had stepped a few miles out of his way just to grasp me by the hand and talk over old times.

"How's she going?" he asked.

"Great!" I replied. "We played here last night to a good house, and there was a public demand that we stay over another night." (At that moment, I think I really believed it.) "We're just distributing the dodgers now."

I saw that Sam's mouth was beginning to water. He talked all around the subject for several minutes, and finally plumped it out: "I s'pose you wouldn't care to sell a piece of the show?"

"I'd have to see my partners about that," I replied. I did so, and after a short consultation and some sparring with Sam, we at length agreed to sell him a half interest in the enterprise for a hundred dollars. He hoisted a roll of bills from his pocket; Sam always had money.

"Make it a fifty and some tens," said I. "We have to use long division on it, you know."

Gus took the fifty and Jim and I divided the rest. My old partner and I were now the owners each of only one-eighth of the show; which made our chances for dividends rather infinitesimal. Of course we and our wives were to get regular salaries as actors.

That night we went to the hall with high expectations. Previously it had been necessary for one of the company to collect admissions at the door until time to start the show; but now we had a treasurer, and one who would be apt to add to our —or more likely, his—income by his dexterity in the handling of money.

It was customary in those days to open the doors a little after 7 and begin the performance at 7.45 or 8. Sam took his place at the door, and presently in came a big Negro with his wife and four goodly-sized sons and daughters. At twenty-five cents apiece, that meant a dollar and a half. Sam had no opportunity to display his artistry, for the colored gentleman had the exact change. They took their seats, and we all waited. 7.30 came, then 7.45 —but nobody else. At 8 there was still no rush to the box office. We continued to peep anxiously through the curtain until 8.30 had passed and the colored family were displaying signs of impatience. At 8.45 Sam came back to consult us. He was in the depths of woe.

"What'll we do?" he asked in a quivering voice. "We can't give the show for a dollar and a half!"

"Only thing is to call it off and give the money back," I suggested.

"Oh, this is terrible! Terrible!" moaned Sam.

"I thought you said you were doing fine! I ought to 'a' known better'n to put my money into a troupe like this. Mighty near the last hundred dollars I had in the world, too!"

"Oh, pshaw, we're liable to have a big house tomorrow night," said Bruno, who was always optimistic.

Choking with emotion, Sam refunded their money to the sons and daughters of Africa and they went out, wondering and disappointed, the youngest one even in tears. I think Sam walked the floor all night in his hotel room.

We moved on to our next date, where the receipts were equally discouraging—$22.75 or something like that. Sam continued to emit low moans of anguish at intervals; and though the ill success of our venture was really something to worry about, I could still (thinking of that unpaid salary of mine back there in Illinois years ago) chuckle secretly at our new partner's mental suffering.

We journeyed down to Sacramento next day, and there came the final, the crushing blow. Jack, the donkey, lay down on the railroad station platform, stretched out his legs and died.

"This is the end!" said Bigley, tragically—as dolorous as Romeo beside the bier of Juliet.

"Oh, maybe not," suggested Bruno. "Burros are cheap."

"Cheap! Ha! Ha! Yes!—and money is plentiful!" retorted Bigley in a hollow voice.

At that moment a youth from the telegraph office touched me on the arm. "Mr. Foy?" said he. "I've got a telegram for Foy and Thompson."

Eagerly we tore it open. It had been relayed to us from San Francisco by Emerson. It ran something like this:

Butte City, Mont.,

Foy and Thompson,
San Francisco, Cal.,
Offer you unlimited engagement, starting at seventy-five per week if acceptable will send railroad tickets

JOHN A. GORDON.

The *Muldoon's Picnic* company expired right then and there on the station platform, as suddenly but as certainly as poor old Jack had died.

XV

BUTTE was the latest boom mining town. Prospectors had been seeking gold there for several years and had discovered—as at other places—that some of the ore which yielded a little gold also bore a considerable percentage of silver. But there was no great quantity of rich ore, and it was not until they had taken off this comparatively thin layer of it and discovered the copper underneath that the town really took on its magical growth. The great Anaconda strike had just been made when we received our call, and a big, irregular ridge lying just east of Butte had been discovered to be almost a solid mass of copper ore. The town contained several thousand inhabitants when we arrived, and hordes were coming every month.

The seventy-five a week salary offered was for the team—that is, $37.50 apiece. We wired acceptance of Mr. Gordon's offer, and informed him that we would need four railroad tickets, as both of us were married.

"Gosh, I wish I could go up there with you fellows!" said Bruno. "I believe I could get a job there, too. But I haven't got the money."

Jim and I had a little cash left, and as we liked Gus, we loaned him enough to buy railroad tickets for himself and wife to Butte, where he succeeded in getting an engagement, as he had hoped, and did very well.

There were tears in Bigley's eyes as he bade us adieu, but they were not caused by regret at the parting. They were for his lost hundred dollars. I gleefully told the Brunos and Thompsons of how Sam had bilked Collins and me in our early youth, and at intervals all the way across Nevada I laughed a low, sardonic 'Ha! Ha!" How I yearned for the time when I could see Ben Collins and tell him the joke!

We took the Central Pacific to Ogden, whence the new Utah & Northern had been built northward to Butte. It was supposed to be completed, but for some reason the trains were stopping at Dillon at the time of our journey, and we rode the rest of the way by stage. As we approached the place, topping one rough hill after another, we began to see, far ahead of us, clouds of smoke overhanging the town; and when we finally overlooked the valley in which Butte is located, we caught a sulphurous odor and saw that the vapor arose, a deep, rich blue in color, from what appeared to be great heaps of burning rock just outside the town. The driver told us that these mounds, which

the Indians aptly called "stink piles," were copper ore being roasted in the open as one of the processes of smelting.

That method was a great nuisance to the inhabitants of Butte. When the wind was right, the sulphurous fumes in the town were almost stifling. I have seen teamsters and others going about their business with sponges or rags tied over their mouths and noses and people often went hurrying along the streets holding handkerchiefs to their faces. At night it was often necessary to carry lanterns and torches to find one's way about. The town was emphatically in the raw when we arrived. It was the muddiest place I ever saw. The only sidewalks were an occasional string of single, foot-wide plank laid end to end, and on some streets there was not even that. In wet weather and especially during the spring thaws, one could hardly get around without rubber boots.

In spite of its youth, Butte already had wealthy magnates—William A. Clark and Marcus Daly being the leading ones. The latter had come to camp only a few years before with a pack on his back. Clark owned a bank, located in a two-story building downtown, and there was a flourishing faro game in operation on the second floor. Mind, I don't say that Mr. Clark had anything to do with the faro bank; I was just thinking of the coinci-

dences that sometimes happen in mining camps.

Clark was not impressive in appearance. He was rather small, slender, wiry and nervous in temperament. His bushy hair and whiskers were not so noticeable in Butte in those days because most other men wore theirs the same way. It used to be told that he and Judge Davis, another well-to-do citizen, being the original plutocrats of the town, were the only men who were permitted to wear a boiled shirt and stiff collar. Few people today think of Clark as a man of action; but he was noted in Butte for a forty-mile ride on horseback which he had made in 1877 from Deer Lodge to Butte over rough territory in three hours, to warn the camp of an Indian uprising under Chief Joseph. A military battalion was at once organized under his command to fight the Indians and it served valiantly under General Gibbon, Clark showing reckless daring in leading his men into dangerous situations. They also tell of his thrilling his men by singing the "Star Spangled Banner" while they were in military formation.

Butte was in the raw in other ways, too. The new railroad had brought a horde of toughs to town—at least, the old citizens claimed they weren't there before—and robbery, theft, slugging and gun play were daily and nightly occurrences. Finally the citizens organized a secret vigilance committee

which posted notices on all the walls of the town, ordering the rough element to "leave town forthwith. This means all who do not seek work and will not accept work." The manifesto bore the committee's secret signature—"3-7-77." It scared the professional crooks, and large numbers of them got out of town at once, but still there was a great deal of disorder. The frankness of moral (or immoral) conditions in the West in those days was illustrated by that street on which there were rows of little one- or two-room shacks, each with the name of its woman occupant displayed above the door on a neatly painted sign or etched in red glass with a light placed behind it.

Gordon's concert hall, where we held forth, was upstairs over a hardware store and was very successful. He engaged some of the best variety actors to be found in the West, and paid what were considered good salaries in those days. We stayed at his place the better part of a year.

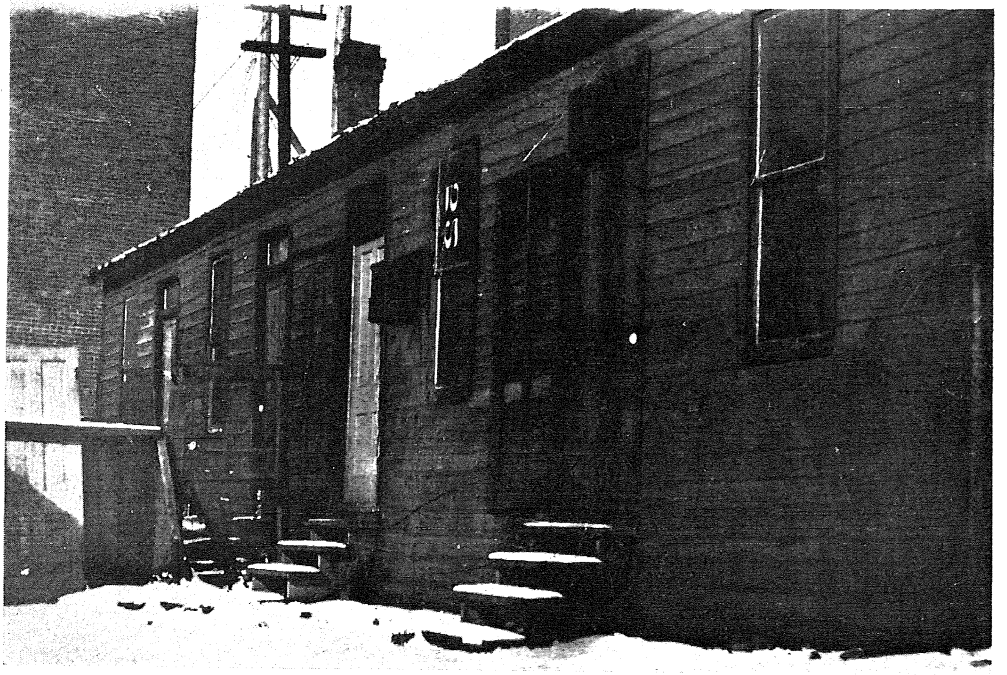
Those western mining camps hungered for outdoor sports, and the attempts to gratify the longing were often pretty crude. Baseball in 1883 was not nearly so universally played as now. None of those Westerners knew anything about football, and tennis was regarded as a game for women and sapheads. They had no race tracks, and worse still, no real race horses. But during the summer of our stay

there, Butte was tremendously interested in human foot racing. It gave them one of their soul's chief cravings—an opportunity to bet on something; and a match between two or three well-known runners aroused about as much excitement as the Kentucky Derby does in Louisville.

Jim Thompson and I, being all-around athletes, knew how to pick up our feet pretty rapidly ourselves, and we ran in several races, each winning two or three firsts. Jim was a little faster than I was. On a good track he had done the hundred yards in as low as 10½ seconds, and he was pretty nearly the best in camp until a fellow named Bennett showed up.

Bennett was supposed to be a Wyoming cowboy. He and Jim and I were in a race one day along with two or three other fellows, and he came out first, with Jim a close second, while I was third. I saw at a glance that Bennett had wonderful action and reserve force, and would be a hard man for us to beat. His admirers and Thompson's argued the question of supremacy until at length Jim and I were induced to make a match with him for $500 a side. I say Jim and I because, though Jim was to do the running, I put up half the money.

We had scarcely made the match when we were given a secret tip that Bennett was a "ringer." His



HOUSE WHERE EDDIE FOY LIVED WHILE PLAYING IN BUTTE (AS IT LOOKED TWENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER)

name was not Bennett and he was not a cowboy, but an Eastern man and a famous professional sprinter, who could, if he chose, do the hundred in ten seconds or better. It appeared that there were a few other sports in town, including Gordon, the concert hall owner and Mayor Oglesby, who ran a feed store, who were in the know and were backing Bennett to the limit. In fact, their money was so plentiful that it began to lengthen the odds on their man. Thompson money took fright and became difficult to find, the odds on Bennett finally rising to 4 to 1. Things looked pretty gloomy for Jim and me, for we could ill afford to lose that five hundred.

The race was to be run on Saturday. Thursday night Bennett muttered to me at the concert hall between acts, "Come outside, back of the building in five minutes. I've got a proposition to make to you."

I scented something crooked, of course, and my curiosity was greatly aroused. I presently strolled out into the darkness of a back street, and found Bennett waiting. He was very nervous lest somebody see us together.

"Foy," said he in a low tone, "I believe you're on the square, and I'm going to let you into something. I can't win that race Saturday."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because I think Thompson can outrun me," he replied with a snicker. "In fact, I know he can. To show you how strong I believe it—" he pressed a little bundle of something into my hand—"here's two thousand that I want you to bet for me on Thompson. Now that ought to encourage you to bet a little money of your own. Borrow, beg or steal it and bet on Jim. You can get 4 to 1 now. I'll give you a nice little percentage of this as a commission for betting it for me. Will you do it?"

I had been thinking fast, trying to fathom the ins and outs of his game. Of course he was planning to throw the race; but why, with all those prominent men backing him?

"I'm putting this in your hands because I think you're on the square," Bennett repeated. "All I ask is that you sign this little receipt."

Of course he knew that Jim and I couldn't afford to lose that five hundred. He must have guessed that it pushed us pretty hard to raise the purse, to say nothing of what bets we might have made since. He therefore thought that I would welcome eagerly the news that we were to win, and would throw in with him on any dodge he proposed; also that we would be less likely to give the thing away than anyone else whom he might ask to place a bet for him.

I took the receipt to a place not far off where I

could read it by the light from a window. It merely read, "I have received from Henry Bennett $2,000 which I agree to bet for him as he directs." I counted the money and the amount was correct. No doubt it was a foolish move, but I had decided to take the money just as an experiment and return it to him later if necessary. Meanwhile I was going to consult a man named Burns who, I knew, was in the concert hall upstairs at that moment. Burns was a plunger, but on the other side of his brain he was as wise as a tree-full of owls, and he was a good friend of mine. I signed Bennett's receipt, and returning to the hall I found Burns and drew him to a table in a corner, where I told him what had passed.

"Of course he's going to throw it," agreed Burns. "Stub his toe or something, just enough to throw him out of his stride, and make believe it was an accident. But I don't believe he's planning this thing alone. Somebody's put him up to it—some gambler, most likely—and they're expecting to cash in big on that four-to-one money. Maybe they're placing some money elsewhere beside the two thousand he gave you."

He pondered a moment, pulling his moustache. Then he said, "Tell you what you do. Carry out Bennett's instructions; bet his money for him. I'll take the bet. I've been betting on him right along,"

he explained with a grin at my wondering face. "I haven't got the money in my pocket just now, but you can consider the bet covered. Better not have a stakeholder because we don't want this thing to go any farther than ourselves. Here, I'll give you a memorandum." He drew some letters and papers out of his pocket, tore off a scrap and wrote on it with pencil:

Edwin Foy
I O U $8,000 if Jim Thompson wins the race Saturday, 16th
J. L. BURNS.

"But how do you know Bennett will win?" I asked.

"Oh, I think he will," he replied with a smile.

I knew he had something up his sleeve, but neither Jim nor I ever guessed what a simple yet effective implement it was. On the afternoon of the race, everything was in readiness and the two contestants had even thrown aside their wraps when Burns drew Bennett aside and said:

"Listen, I want three or four words with you, Mr. Alias Bennett. We all know you're a ringer. We know who you are and know you can win this race if you want to. And I happen to know that you've laid plans to throw it. I could holler that out here right now, and somebody'd let daylight through you before you ever got a chance to start."

Perspiration suddenly bedewed Bennett's worried countenance.

"Now listen again!" said Burns, leaning forward and raising his left index finger while his right hand rested as if unconsciously on the butt of a big .45 in his belt. "I'm going to be standing right down there at the finish line—close beside the track. And when you cross the line, I warn you, *you'd better be in front!*"

He softly slapped his pistol butt, gave Bennett one last hard look and turned away. "Wait a minute, Mr. Burns!" Bennett exclaimed, half whispering, his face white with fear; but Burns was gone.

It was too late for Bennett to do anything. He dared not crawfish on the race altogether. Probably his own pals were nowhere near him, not daring to be seen with him. He had to work his problem out alone, and he had only a few seconds to do it in, for the starter was already calling him to take his position.

Bennett ran that race with a look of agony on his face. No man was ever more actually between the devil and the deep sea. There at the finish stood Burns with his hand on his pistol. Bennett simply had to win. On the other hand were his pals with whom he had agreed to throw the race, and who had hazarded thousands of dollars on Thompson. Bennett ran with his face a mask of tragedy, his

eyes on Burns at every stride. I believe that the strain on him was so great that it came near beating him—for Jim was conscientiously running his best. But as they struck the tape, Bennett was less than an arm's length in front. He fell, half fainting, into somebody's arms, and a moment later staggered away into the crowd. He vanished from town that night, and I never heard how he squared matters with the men who, we believed, were at the bottom of his intended trickery—nor who the men were. They took care to keep their identity well hidden.

"I promised you boys a commission for giving me a chance at that bet," said Burns, when I gave him the $2,000. He peeled off four or five of the bills and handed them to me with his wide grin. They totaled an even thousand.

"That'll cover your losses and a little more," he explained.

XVI

It was the high ambition of every Western variety actor to "go East." Not only did a call to the Eastern stage mean the luxury of making New York one's headquarters, but it was also a symbol of advancement, of recognition by the most critical theatrical taste in the country.

But wait a moment! When I said every Western actor I was wrong. I meant all but one. Jim Thompson couldn't entirely sympathize with my ambition to go east. He liked the West, and the West liked us. We now had no trouble in keeping our time filled there. We could go to any one of several Western towns and stay six months or a year at a stretch if we liked, meanwhile saving no little in travelling expense. Jim argued that to spend all our time at comfortable salaries in such of the larger cities between Chicago and the Pacific sands as we liked best would be a pretty satisfactory scheme of life. Still, he was keenly alive to the honor of a call to an Eastern theatre, and anxious to have the experience; and he was therefore highly gratified when we received the offer of an engagement with Carncross's Minstrels at the

Eleventh Street Theatre in Philadelphia. For this contract, our thanks were due to Chauncey Olcott, who had left Emerson to sing with Carncross and who had recommended us very highly.

We left Butte with invitations to come again ringing in our ears, and journeyed eastward, Jim and I with very different ideas in our heads. I had made up my mind that I was going East to stay. I was determined to storm the Eastern citadel and settle down there; to make eastern audiences accept me as an actor and demand my presence at least once yearly. Jim on the other hand, regarded our eastern engagement as merely a pleasant and profitable interlude, and a corking good bit of publicity for us among Western theatre and concert hall managers.

We were at that time dressing in the style which among the mining camps was considered the swagger, anti-dude Sunday attire of a real he-man—comfortable fitting store clothes, soft shirts with low collars, flowing ties and broad-brimmed, grayish-tan Stetson hats. When we breezed into the elegant office of the immaculately Eastern-dressed John L. Carncross, he looked up at us in some surprise, but I think I detected in his glance a hint of secret approval of the advertising value of our make-up.

"Now I don't know a thing about you gentlemen

except by hearsay," he remarked after we had exchanged greetings. "Just tell me what you can do."

I should explain that in those halcyon days of minstrelsy every blackface comedian coveted the job of sitting on the end. The end men, if they were clever, won gratifying rewards in laughter, and to be a good end man was to reach the top rung in minstrelsy.

"Well, we're good singers," I replied to Mr. Carncross's question. "We can hit the bull's eye with 'most any kind of a song, especially topical. We're good singers and good acrobats—but we're not end men, Mr. Carncross; we're not funny."

After some more conversation we parted to meet again at rehearsal next morning. When we appeared modestly in the wings, Carncross beckoned to us, and calling the rest of his big company to order, he raised his voice and said:

"Gentlemen, I have to present you this morning two very interesting and unusual phenomena. I have been in this business for twenty-five years, and I thought I had seen everything that there was to be seen in it. I thought I had had all the surprises. But I was wrong. Yesterday for the first time in my career I met two young men who frankly admit that they are not funny enough to sit on the end!"

Carncross's troupe in those days represented the very highest pitch of achievement in the minstrel

art. They had a regular clientele which included lawyers, doctors, ministers and some of the social élite of Philadelphia, who went to see the show at regular intervals, some as often as once a month, others whenever the program was changed. Carncross had been running his show there, with only one very short interval, since the latter Sixties, and he continued to operate it without a break and with only an occasional short trip out of town until his death in 1896. Philadelphia loved its minstrel show then and loves it yet; for there is still a permanent troupe playing there, still rattling the old bones and tambo, still holding its loyal clientele, many of them sons and grandsons and great-grandsons of the folks who used to laugh at Carncross and Dixey and the other great minstrels there in the long ago.

Carncross himself was a clever performer with a superb tenor voice, but he was not taking part in the program when we were there—save that once when we went to Washington for an engagement of three or four weeks, he sang a solo and on one occasion even sat in the middle. But as a regular interlocutor E. N. Slocum had just succeeded George Frothingham (who later played Friar Tuck for so many years in the operas, *Robin Hood* and *Maid Marian*), and he in turn gave place during our engagement to Frank Dumont,

another famous old minstrel. Dumont, by the way, took over the troupe at Carncross's death in '96.

Chauncey Olcott was singing ballads with the company with great success, and two other prominent performers were the so-called Dockstader brothers. George Alfred Clapp, who had begun his minstrel career a few years before as Lew Clapp, had teamed up with the then more famous Charlie Dockstader in 1878, and in so doing had sunk his own surname—which he didn't like, anyhow—so that the team might be known as the Dockstader Brothers. Charlie left Carncross because of ill health some time after our arrival, but Lew remained, still calling himself Lew Dockstader, and so he was known until the end of his life.

We were with Carncross twelve weeks. While I was working there, Rose played an engagement of several weeks at Gilmore's Central Theatre and won high praise from a clientele which was often rather hard to satisfy. Some church people of the city heard her sing an oratorio number in that rich, smooth contralto voice which was winning a considerable reputation for her, and they sent other church members to hear her. The result was that a few of the wealthier ones got together and urged her to go into oratorio work, offering to supply the money for the necessary study to that end. It was

a very tempting prospect, and we would have considered it seriously had not a crisis in her life been approaching just then. Nothing in the way of a course of study could be attempted until that was over.

From Philadelphia we went back to Chicago, Rose and I to stay for at least a portion of the summer; and there my troubles began. Thompson insisted on going back to the West. The shortness of the engagements in the East made work there seem very precarious to him as compared with our old field, where we might settle down and stay almost as long as we liked. But I had been stung by ambition, and was determined to climb higher than the concert halls or die in the attempt. On this rock Jim and I split, and finally agreed to go our separate ways.

We had developed considerable feeling in our arguments over the matter before the final decision; but when it came to parting, we melted again and thought only of the six jolly years we had spent together and of our regret at breaking the tie. We had stood by each other through some very thrilling, some very strenuous, and some very funny hours, and had found each other true. We had had experiences which we could never have again—for already the old West was changing. Dodge, for example, was declining as a cow town,

the mines at Leadville were giving out, Denver was becoming more sophisticated. There were tears in our eyes as we shook hands at the last.

"I hope you may succeed, Eddie," said Jim. "And now that you've decided, I'll say that I believe you've got it in you to do it. I've thought so ever since I first saw you back there at Fort Wayne."

We parted, and saw each other only occasionally in the years that followed. Jim went back to his old love, and there he spent most of his time until he died a few years ago.

I succeeded in getting an engagement to do a single act with Carncross early in the following season; but just at the time when I was due to join him, my wife's critical moment was almost at hand. I was torn with anxiety at leaving her, and yet we needed the money so badly that it seemed I must go. With many misgivings I bade her good-bye, boarded the train and started eastward. But the farther I went the more my fears increased, until every mile became a torture. By the time we reached Pittsburgh, I was certain that I had a vision of her dying. I got off the train, pawned my watch—for I had left practically all my funds at home for her care—and bought a ticket back to Chicago. I was none too soon—for only a few days more together were left to us. The ordeal, when it

came, was too great for her strength, and she died in my arms. The little child for which she gave her life was taken also.

Now and then in life there is a sorrow so keen that the pain of it never quite departs. My grief at the loss of my youthful sweetheart was one of these. Life seemed to stop short for a while and almost lose its reason for continuance. Rose had been the most perfect chum and partner that a man ever had; always a good sport, always patient and tolerant of my numerous shortcomings. There was that time in Butte, for example, when I turned foolish over a faro game and stuck with it, wildly trying to recoup the money already lost, until I had tossed away all our savings. When I went home, miserably enough, and confessed to her what I had done, she turned pale as death for a moment and sat looking at me in a way that pierced me to the heart. Then she pulled herself together, forced a faint smile and patted my hand.

"It's all right, sweetheart," she said. "Don't grieve. We'll make some more money. Only——" and she lifted her finger solemnly, "don't do it again." And I never did while she lived.

For a time after her death I was too sick at heart to do anything. Finally I succeeded in reinstating the Carncross engagement, but I was not at my best, and I fear I did not make as big a hit as be-

fore. With Rose's passing, I seemed to have reached the ebb tide of my fortunes. I could get no engagement of any consequence, and finally I was compelled to go on at Kohl & Middleton's Dime Museum in Chicago, where they gave ten shows a day. Anyone who remembers the old dime museum will recall that their variety programs were very brief. I think I threw forty somersaults daily during the several weeks I played there and at their house in Milwaukee.

It really seemed as if Jim Thompson had been right. For a year or more I could get only short engagements and with none too prosperous companies. I was with the Rentz-Santley Burlesque Company for a while. They were giving a travesty on *Orpheus and Eurydice,* and one of the company was Anne Sutherland, who is doing a strong dramatic part in a play on Broadway today. Then I played with Barry and Fay in *Irish Aristocracy,* which was simply the original version of *Muldoon's Picnic.* The two stars always had a sort of grouch at me for playing that pirated version of their piece in California, though goodness knows we didn't do them any harm with our little tour of the small towns up and down the Sierras and the foothills.

My next job was with a musical farce called *The Tigers,* which was owned and partly acted by Kelly

and Mason, the first-named being Harry Kelly, who is still alive and acting at this writing. The piece was written by Ariel Barney and was, to tell the truth, an imitation of Charles H. Hoyt's farces, then becoming so popular.

In this I played no less than three prominent parts, whose respective names were Buffington Quick, Ah There, and English (not to speak of doing also two or three smaller bits) and at least one sapient critic was good enough to say that I "displayed remarkable versatility in all of them." My principal part was that of a jigging, staring, stuttering, grotesque bell-boy; and in this role I seemingly began to disprove my perhaps over-modest admission to Carncross that I could lay no claim to being an able funmaker. But the play itself was not a good vehicle, and when the troupe finally collapsed, I was left stranded in New York, with no job in sight and winter coming on apace.

I was stopping at a boarding house in Great Jones Street at that time. That street is now a cañon shut in by great wholesale houses, but forty years ago it was a quiet byway full of old residences and little shops. Union Square, a few blocks to northward, was the theatrical center, and the benches in the Square were the favorite places for us actors to gather and tell each other how good we were, and knock the managers, the critics, and

the public. They were the favorite loafing places in summer, I mean, when the trees which then made the Square a bower of green, threw the benches into cool shadow. But now it was winter, and one couldn't sit on a park bench save on an infrequent, mild, sunny day, and not even then if one hadn't any overcoat. The few dollars I had left were sparingly doled out to the boarding house lady, and then I soaked my overcoat down at Simpson's, on the corner, and borrowed one from Pete Gale of the vaudeville team composed of himself, Joe Pettengill, Pete Dailey and Jimmy Hoey, and known as The American Four. Some of these—Pete Dailey in particular—became more famous in later years when they were with other combinations.

The team of Hawkins and Collins—the last-named being my boyhood friend, Ben Collins—were in town and boarding at the same place, and I could have borrowed money from Collins if he had had any to loan, but the shoe was always on the other foot; he was habitually borrowing from somebody else. When he had money he loaned or gave it away as if it had been water. He was thoroughly irresponsible—a beloved vagabond—a perfect blend of Puck and Rip van Winkle. He was one of the bright stars of the varieties then; I meet old-timers yet who declare that the team of Haw-

kins and Collins was one of the greatest the vaudeville stage ever knew; but a fondness for the cup that both cheers and inebriates was his curse.

He had just had a rather serious bout with J. Barleycorn during which he began seeing things, and we took some of his clothes away from him to prevent his getting out after more liquor. But an afternoon or two later, when he had sobered up enough to have an intense craving for a drink, and while I was asleep and the other boarders were away, he succeeded in collecting enough of other people's clothes to make a tolerably decent appearance, took that handsome overcoat which I had borrowed from Gale, and hocked it at the corner pawnshop for ten dollars.

While he was in the shop a little girl, no more than twelve years old, thin and sad-faced, came in with a ring which her mother had sent to be pawned. What her history was, we never knew. The mother might have been a worthy woman, or she might have been a drunkard or a dope fiend. The pawnbroker took a brief look at the ring and handed it back to the child.

"No good," said he. "We can't loan anything on that."

Tears came into the girl's eyes. "But mamma must have some money;" she faltered. "Can't you give just a little on it?"

"Not a cent," said the money-lender. "It's phoney. It ain't worth a dime."

Slowly the child turned towards the door, with tears running down her cheeks. Collins had stood all this time with the ten-dollar bill in his hand, a silent but deeply interested spectator. He craved a drink at that moment above all things else in the world. He had virtually stolen and pawned another man's property just to get money to buy liquor; but he was not proof against that picture of distress. He stepped suddenly to the girl's side, took her hand, put the money into it and closed her fingers over it. She gave a startled look at it and raised her eyes to his in amazement.

"Why—what—what——" she stammered.

"Little girl," said Collins in his most solemn manner, "tell your mamma you met Jay Gould and he was on a drunk." And with that he strode out of the shop and came home to weep because he had nothing wherewithal to buy booze.

Ben's impishness in another direction was displayed in his episode with Carl Hertz, a German magician who was playing the variety houses in those days. Notwithstanding the fact that Hertz was as tight as the bark on a tree, Ben tried to borrow four dollars from him one day. When he needed money, he would have agreed to write an opera for you for four dollars. Of course Hertz

refused. Collins didn't like him, anyhow—as a matter of fact, he wasn't popular, though he couldn't be blamed for not loaning money in this particular instance—and so Ben planned revenge.

One of Hertz's tricks concerned a live rabbit which he caused to vanish on the stage. He then walked down the main aisle and "found" the animal in the pocket of a man in the audience. This was done by planting a man—some casual person picked up by the house manager—in a certain seat, always the same one, with a second live rabbit, trained for the job, in his inner coat pocket.

Collins by a little sleuthing discovered the location of this capper's seat. He then bought a seat some distance away and gave the ticket to a friend, who came in just as the show was beginning. Collins now took the friend's coupon, went to Hertz's man and whispered, "Say, there's been a mistake. We gave you the wrong seat. The house manager says you're to move over to this one"—presenting the coupon for the other seat.

The man exchanged coupons with Collins and moved to the other place, Collins's pal taking the vacated chair. Of course, when Hertz marched confidently down the aisle and plunged his hand into the pocket of the bogus assistant, there was no rabbit there. Distractedly he felt in the man's other coat pockets. He dared not say anything. Perspira-

tion stood on his face. It was evident to the spectators that his stunt had struck a snag; the gallery gods began to jeer and make uncomplimentary remarks.

"I must apologize, ladies and gentlemen," said Hertz at last in a shaking voice. "I have failed on that trick for the first time in my career." He went back to the stage and closed his act hurriedly, ahead of time, fearing that in his agitation he might bungle another trick.

Hawkins and Collins followed him on the bill; and one of Collins's first moves was to step to the front of the stage and say, "Now, ladies and gentlemen, I'll show you how to finish that rabbit trick." He then went through with a lot of comical mumbo-jumbo, pretended to pull a coupon from his pocket and read the figures on it in an audible voice, "Row 7L, seat 23." Striding down the runway, he walked over to the place where Hertz's man was sitting, wondering what in the deuce he was going to do with that live rabbit; thrust his hand into the capper's pocket and brought the animal forth. As he went back to the stage Collins explained to the audience, "Mr. Hertz merely got his coupons mixed, that's all."

Hertz's hatred of him forever thereafter was simply poisonous. Collins died a few years later, before he had reached middle life.

After loafing several weeks in New York I was given a tip by a theatrical agent named Fitzgerald who took an interest in me because of my real name being the same as his own (though he deeply deplored my having discarded it). He sent me to Gilmore of the Grand Central, a variety house in Philadelphia, who gave me a limited engagement. I had played there four weeks when I heard that Gardiner & French, managers of the Carrie Swain company, then playing at the Chestnut Street Theatre, needed an eccentric, acrobatic comedian like myself, and I hurried over there and got the job; and thus I came to another turn in my fortunes.

XVII

GARDINER & FRENCH would not agree to pay me more than twenty dollars a week salary at the start, but promised me forty if I made good. Their play was an English farci-melodrama called *Jack-in-the-Box*—one of a variety very popular then; a medley of everything from near-tragedy to burlesque. Any of the characters in such a show was liable to pause at any moment and burst into song or do a specialty.

The star was Carrie Swain, a blonde soubrette who was noted not only for ability as a comedienne but for her knack at throwing a flip-flop upon occasion. The hoyden or tomboy was a tremendously popular type on the stage then; *Fanchon the Cricket,* a rollicking lass of French origin, was followed by scores more of English and American make. I well remember when Minnie Maddern, now Mrs. Fiske, was playing that sort of part. This type was Carrie Swain's forte. One admiring critic called her "an incessant little bundle of effervescence." She had just finished a successful tour in a play called *Cad the Tomboy,* when she went down to Philadelphia to rehearse for *Jack-in-the-*

Box. In the new piece she played a male part—a harum-scarum youth named Jack Merryweather; and it is a singular thing that the more strait-laced of the critics and public could forgive her wearing male attire much more easily than they could her throwing a back flip. Feminine circles in many cities where we played were torn by the grave question, "Can a woman turn a somersault and be a lady?"

On the morning after we appeared in New York one of the critics wrote:

"'The divine flip flaps' is what some reckless Frenchman would call the style of drama that has broken out at the Union Square Theatre. An attractive young woman calling herself Carrie Swain undertakes to hold an assemblage and carry an entire drama by the flexibility of her backbone and her voice and the versatility of her legs and her talent. You are to imagine a robust young woman with a deal of that animal grace that is seen in a cat, and with a rich, mellow voice, who earns all her applause by trying to be as unwomanly as possible. She sings a song at the footlights. It is intended to be pathetic. At the end of each verse she turns a handspring on the stage. Agility thus accomplishes what ability will not. The whole exhibition is vulgar, coarse, and painful to good taste. . . ." But notwithstanding his disapproval the

critic ruefully admits that "The girl will probably fill the Union Square with rude people for weeks."

Hugh Fay, formerly of Barry and Fay, was the leading man in the show. One of the scenes was supposed to represent an English fair with its numerous side shows, and here I did a stunt as a burlesque ballet dancer, with red tights and fluffy little skirt. After an engagement of several weeks we moved up to the Union Square Theatre in New York, then under the management of Shook and Collier, who had just taken it over from the famous manager, A. M. Palmer. I wasn't given much notice when we opened there on February 18, 1886. In the program the careful printer merely announced in small type that "In the Croyden Fair scene Mr. E. Fry will give an Italian Burlesque Ballet."

At the time of our engagement Henry Irving was playing at a theatre near by. One evening, entirely as my own idea and without mentioning it to anybody, I donned my ballet costume but put on facial makeup and wig in imitation of Irving. When I came into the wings to make my entrance an English actor who saw me stared in horrified amazement. He recognized my intent and was shocked at my sacrilege.

"If you go on like that," he predicted, "they'll mob you."

But I went on like that, and instead of mobbing me the crowd howled with delight. That makeup fairly halted the show. At the close of the performance Gardiner, the manager and Carrie Swain's husband, came to me with ill-concealed anxiety in his face.

"Now, listen!" said he. "You made a sort of a hit to-night with that fool outfit of yours, and there may be some fellows around here to-morrow trying to hire you away from us, but I think you ought to remember that we gave you your big chance. My partner, French, didn't like you at first, but I put you on, anyhow, and I hope you'll stand by me. Just to show you that my heart's in the right place, I'm going to raise you to $75 a week."

"Mr. Gardiner, don't worry," said I, earnestly. "I'll stay with you." That seventy-five a week was the highest salary I had ever received. I began sending Mother a little extra money to make up for the recent long, lean period when I couldn't send anything at all. Thereafter for many years, I never lacked a job.

No company stayed very long in New York in those days. Later in the winter we toured a few Eastern cities, then did a hop, skip and jump across the continent to San Francisco, Miss Swain's old home, where she was immensely popular. My pleasure at going back to the jolly old town was

cankered by saddened memories of the wife and partner with whom I had had such good times there in earlier days.

Frisco was the vacation Mecca for all actors who could get there, for because of the equable climate, theatres flourished there through the summer as well as in winter; and there were always stock companies there who could almost have their pick of the country's best players between May and September.

We opened at the Bush Street Theatre on June 7th in *Cad the Tomboy*. I played the comedy part of Thomas Burns. In spite of the fact that I had become rather well known to San Francisco, one or two newspaper writers at first showed a tendency to call me Mr. Edwin Fay. After a week there we moved over to the Alcazar, which was a stock-company theatre under the management of George Wallenrod. It was located on O'Farrell Street in the same building as was the Olympic Athletic Club. The Olympic was above the theatre.

Stock companies in a city like San Francisco were operated in a manner entirely different from anything we know today. Now and then a travelling company would be taken on bodily at the stock theatre for an engagement of a week or so. Or perhaps the travelling star would have only part of

a company or no company at all, depending upon the stock organization for support. Occasionally when a travelling company had an off week, some of its members might assist a local stock company. Troupes were quite fluid in those days, and flowed in and out of each other freely and as required.

When Miss Swain had an off week, I went on with the Alcazar company. I spent some happy days with that stock company that summer and the next. It was a fine organization; Jeffreys Lewis, who died a year or two ago aged sixty-nine, almost unknown to the younger generation, but a famous leading woman in her day; E. J. Buckley, Nick Long, L. R. Stockwell, George Osbourne, Laura Biggar—all names to conjure with in the Eighties and for some time thereafter. Buckley was one of the big leading men of his day. Later he was with Booth and Barrett, and many a time when those two great stars took a curtain call, they seized Buckley by the hand and drew him out on the stage with them.

Miss Swain played three weeks at the Alcazar in June and July, on alternating weeks with the stock company, with whom I played between-times. One of their big hits that summer was *A Desperate Game,* in which Miss Lewis and Buckley played the leads, Stockwell, Long, Osbourne, Laura Biggar, Kate Chester and I also appearing. In July



JAMES J. CORBETT
JUST AFTER HE FOUGHT SULLIVAN



KATE CASTLETON, WHO SANG "FOR GOODNESS' SAKE DON'T SAY I TOLD YOU"

"Bonny Kate" Castleton came to the Alcazar to open her new play, *Crazy Patch,* and I played with her for the first time, assuming the role of Bill Smith, the lunatic, which I afterwards played for a whole season. Stockwell, Long and Osbourne also appeared in her support, and our old friend and California favorite, Charlie Reed, was her leading man, having the role of Felix McGlue, an Irish policeman. He made his entrance on roller skates; and as the original roller-skating craze was then at its height, this made a tremendous hit.

There was an interesting event in July of that summer, when all the actors then in the city joined in a testimonial to David Belasco. After achieving considerable success as a director on the Coast, Belasco had gone East a short time before and made a good start on Broadway. But that summer he came back to Frisco to direct a stock company—practically an all-star organization including Robert Mantell, Maurice Barrymore and others—which Al Hayman had organized at the Baldwin Theatre. It was a popular idea then to get up "benefit" or "testimonial" performances for some well-liked director, actor, or even theatre treasurer; and San Francisco was already so proud of Belasco that it responded heartily when Charles Bozenta (husband of Madame Modjeska), Barrymore and Clay M. Greene, the dramatist, as a com-

mittee, arranged the benefit for the night of July 18th.

It was a great program. The Alcazar company, headed by Jeffreys Lewis, played one act of *Clothilde*; the Baldwin company, with Maurice Barrymore, Joseph R. Grismer, Phoebe Davies and others, gave one act of *Called Back,* and the *Shadows of a Great City* company contributed one act of their play. In addition to this E. J. Buckley recited "'Ostler Joe," Miss Swain did one of her acrobatic specialties, Barrymore, McKee Rankin and M. B. Curtis (famous as "Sam'l of Posen") gave readings, and I did some imitations of prominent stars. It made me rather proud to be called upon to do a single act along with such distinguished company.

I received an offer that summer of a place for the coming season with George S. Knight, a well-known actor, one of whose favorite specialties was a German dialect part. Knight (whose real name was George Washington Sloan) had a play which Bronson Howard had written originally for William J. Florence and his wife under the title, *Only a Tramp*. But Mrs. Florence did not like her part in the piece, and so it was rejected. Knight then bought the play from Howard and rechristened it *Rudolph,* later calling it *Baron Rudolph.* As a

place in Knight's company promised to extend my reputation more widely over the country, I accepted the job.

I was to report for duty in New York about the first of September. New York being a long way from San Francisco, I requested transportation money from Mr. Knight, and his manager sent me $100. I bade farewell to the Alcazar company with regret; for there I had had some wonderfully valuable experiences in real acting alongside some masters and mistresses of the art.

I travelled eastward to Omaha, and between trains there I met a friend in whose company I was inveigled into bucking a faro game, with the result that I wired Mr. Knight that evening, asking him to send another hundred dollars. He did so, and I journeyed on to Chicago. I found upon my arrival there that Mother needed some new clothes, which reminded me that my own wardrobe ought to be replenished a bit before I entered the presence of a star like Mr. Knight. I had become rather arrogant by this time and felt sure that he couldn't get along without me, so I wired for another hundred. After I had done so, I experienced a sinking feeling in the stomach. Perhaps I had overstepped the limit of his patience, after all. But presently a letter came from his manager, enclosing a check,

sarcastically hinting that the cost of travelling must have gone up considerably since he last saw the road, and requesting that I report at once.

I took the next train east and went down to Asbury Park, where Knight had a summer home. When I came out on the veranda where he was sitting, he looked me up and down critically and with a simulation of great wonderment, and at length remarked:

"I don't know how good an actor you are—they tell me you're all right; but I've learned one thing about you—you're a darned good collector!"

His company opened in Boston in the fall, the first bill being a revival of a comedy in which he had already made a great success, *Over the Garden Wall.* Knight, as Julius Snitz, was in a state of intoxication through most of the play, and never failed to get uproarious laughter. I played the part of his nephew, the juvenile lead, and the critics generally spoke of my work as "successful." Knight also had in his company the three famous St. Felix sisters, who were great favorites of that period.

During most of that season we used Knight's new play, *Baron Rudolph,* whose theme was similar in a general way to that afterwards used in *The Music Master.* Rudolph was a likable but unsuccessful man, petulantly cast off by his wife so that she might marry the heavy, a hard-hearted mill-owner,

rolling in wealth. Rudolph became a tramp and tasted the very dregs of bitterness, being roughly repulsed from the millionaire's home when he begged for just a glimpse of his little daughter. But later he fell heir to a German title, recovered his wife and daughter and all ended happily.

I may not be believed when I state that during the greater part of my engagement with Knight, I played the part of the stony-hearted captain of industry who had stolen Rudolph's wife. I very nearly wrecked the show one night while in this role. One Jimmy Quinn, whom I had known with Carncross's Minstrels, joined the show to play minor parts. To set forth my villainy more pointedly, the workmen in my mills were represented as being greatly oppressed and almost ready to strike. A spokesman was sent to me to plead for a redress of their wrongs. This spokesman was Jimmy Quinn. According to the script he entered where I sat reading a newspaper and said respectfully, "May I have a word with you, sir?"

I looked up at him in cold amazement at his presumption.

"I am sent by the men in the mill," he went on, "to ask you, sir, if you will not consider our plea for better working conditions."

"This is neither the time nor the place for such matters," I would reply, curtly—and so on. Re-

member that in those days the actors were still furnishing their own costumes; and the limitations of their wardrobes and their ideas of fitness sometimes produced strange effects. Jimmy had been instructed to dress as a workingman, in flannel shirt, battered derby hat and with his coat over his arm. He had followed those instructions to the letter; but for the rest of his outfit, he had dug into his minstrel wardrobe and donned possibly the only things he had—a pair of enormously baggy trousers in gaudy plaids about five inches across and huge comic minstrel shoes. When I looked up from my newspaper his appearance was so ludicrous that I was seized with uncontrollable mirth. When he made his request for an interview I could not answer a word, but screened my face from the audience with the newspaper and shook with laughter. Jimmy became nervous; he waited, then cleared his throat and went through his request again, meanwhile begging me *sotto voce* to be calm:—

"I am sent by the men (nix, Eddie!) to ask you, sir, if you will not consider our plea for better working conditions. (Brace up, Eddie, and gimme the line.)"

This only aggravated my mirth. I couldn't utter a word. Jimmy was in panic. He stood a moment, perspiring copiously, then suddenly bawled out,

"I am pursued! I am pursued!" and ran pell-mell off the stage.

That sobered me like a douche of cold water; but no amount of gagging on my part could conceal the fact that the scene had slipped a cog.

Knight reached San Francisco in May, 1887, and there, after playing a week or two with him, I went back to my old friends, the Alcazar Stock Company. This summer they had Frank Mordaunt, another leading man famous in the East for many years thereafter. They also had Stockwell, Osbourne, George Trader, E. N. Thayer, Frank Richardson, Gustavus Levick, Charles G. Ray, Maude Granger, May Brandon, Fanny Bowman and Mrs. Kiskadden, known to the stage as Annie Adams—not to speak of an occasional appearance of the latter's young daughter Maude, just back for the summer vacation from her school at Salt Lake City.

Harbor Lights was the bill for the first week in June, and then came the great German comedian, Gus Williams, for a four weeks' engagement, his entire support being from the Alcazar company. The bill for his first week was *Oh, What a Night!* in which I played the part of Henry Hobbs. For the second week the play was *One of the Finest,* in which I played Mort Devine. *Captain Mishler* was the third week's bill and for the fourth he

put on *Keppler's Fortune.* In this little Maude Adams, then aged about fifteen, had the ingenue part, and I was her sweetheart. Even at that early date there could be no doubt as to her great talent as an actress.

We played to packed houses all through the Williams engagement. On July 11th we put on Bartley Campbell's *Siberia,* which ran for two weeks. In this Mordaunt, Thayer, Levick, Osbourne, Maude Granger, Annie Adams and others did some great work. Hobart Bosworth, later a popular leading man on Broadway and in more recent years a prominent screen actor but then a comparative youngster just beginning his career, played Governor Jarackoff. There was a place for a ballet in one of the scenes, and someone told Manager Wallenrod that he could get a dozen or more ballet girls from the stranded Carleton Opera Company at low rates.

"Vat do I need mit ballet girls ven I've got Foy?" he countered; and so, although the play was being given seriously, I filled in that gap with the burlesque ballet dance which I had done with Carrie Swain. It afforded what the modern movie director insists upon—"comic relief"—but I fear that a Broadway critic of today would have said that it was slightly out of key with the rest of the production.

It was during those two summers in San Francisco that I became acquainted with two men who in later years were among my dearest friends and are yet—James J. Corbett and William Jerome, the song writer, composer of "Sweet Rosie O'Grady," "Bedelia," and many other popular songs, as well as several musical comedies. I have already remarked that the Olympic Athletic Club was just above the Alcazar Theatre, and it was there that Corbett, then a young giant of about twenty, was beginning to show his athletic prowess. Even in his teens he had been so precociously large and mature that he was hobnobbing with men. He was a lover of the theatre and I of athletics. He remembered seeing me at the Adelphi and with Emerson several years before, and he saw everything at the Alcazar. I sparred many a round with him at the club, and he took me out to his home, where I became very chummy with his father and mother. I was a regular visitor to their home thereafter whenever I was in Frisco, and Jim likewise was frequently my guest in Chicago during my long stay there.

Even in those kid days of his, Jim was telling his friends in all seriousness that in the near future he was going to take the world's heavyweight championship away from John L. Sullivan; and after experiencing a few of his pile-driver wallops

on various portions of my frame, I was ready to believe him. Billy Jerome was another convert. He and I became Corbett's leading unofficial press agents, and touted him far and wide in the face of much unbelief. When Jim actually defeated the great John L. in 1892, Billy and I made ourselves nuisances to all and sundry with our "I told you so's," and reminders of how we had been predicting this for at least five years.

Jerome, then just beginning his career, used to take Jim and me out into the parks in Frisco to try out his latest ideas on us. "Listen, boys," he would say. "How do you like this?" and he would sing a stanza or two.

"Great!" we would comment, enthusiastically. "It'll knock 'em cold!" We were a perfect little mutual admiration society, each agreeing that the other was the best in his class. And now, after a forty-years' test of our friendship, I can add that Jerome and Corbett are two of the most lovable men and most thorough gentlemen I have ever known. Clay M. Greene, the dramatist, was another good friend whom I acquired in those early Frisco days. He later wrote the lines for some of the big Henderson productions in which I played in Chicago.

I was Corbett's witness when he signed the agreement to fight Sullivan; and of course I sat

up anxiously (I was then in Chicago) awaiting news from the battle. When it came I turned a few cartwheels, but my mother, who was an old lady of strong prejudices, looked very glum.

"What's the matter, Mother?" I demanded. "Why don't you give three cheers for my friend Corbett?"

She looked at me solemnly. "To think of it!" she mourned. "A Mayo man licked a Kerry man!" She was uncompromisingly loyal to the old county which had given birth to John L. and herself.

I can get a laugh yet out of the memory of the night when Corbett and I, in the presence of several other friends in the Congress Hotel in Chicago, got to bantering each other, and finally wagered, each that the other would not have the nerve to jump in the lake with his clothes on, just as he stood.

The dare having been taken up by both of us, the matter had to be settled at once, so the whole party hustled across Michigan Avenue, climbed over or through three or four strings of freight cars standing on the Illinois Central sidings, and went out on a pier. I wore an inexpensive pongee suit, but Jim, the blamed scoundrel, had on his best all-wool clothes, and had no intention whatsoever of jumping in the lake; he preferred to pay the bet.

Well, we two lined up right on the edge of the pier, squatted and swung arms while someone counted, "one, two, three!" In I went with a thunderous splash, but not so James J. Instead, he gave me a loud haw-haw. When the others saw his game, two of them tried to push him in, but he got away and outran them to shore. That was one occasion when I was plumb sore on Jim Corbett. When I crawled out of the lake, wet as a drowned rat, I would have licked him if I had been big enough.

But I am getting far away from Frisco in '87. I had a good offer that summer from the Kate Castleton company, which expected to play *Crazy Patch* again during the coming season. Miss Castleton wanted me to take the comedy part of Bill Smith, the lunatic, which I had played with her for one week at the Alcazar the previous summer. I accepted and opened the season with her at St. Paul, August 29th, 1887. Miss Castleton was an English girl, very beautiful and winsome and less vigorous in her methods than Carrie Swain. She had enjoyed great popularity in this country for three or four years. Two songs which she sang while I travelled with her became big popular hits—"For Goodness' Sake, Don't Say I Told You!" and "'Will You Walk into my Parlor?' Said the Spider to the Fly." Miss Castleton died, still comparatively young, only a few years later.

It was while playing that part in *Crazy Patch* that I began using more and more the clownish manner, makeup and business which characterized my work in the extravaganzas and musical comedies of the many years which followed. In fact, it was that winter that I made a country-wide reputation as an eccentric farceur. We had a very successful winter, and in the course of our travels reached Chicago early in the spring. We had played a week or two there when David Henderson, then planning the second of the big musical spectacles which made him famous, asked for an interview with me. He informed me that he had just seen me in action, and would like to engage me to play leading comedy parts in his company. I accepted, and thus began another era in my career.

XVIII

DAVID HENDERSON was a clever, canny Scotchman who had been a prominent dramatic critic in this country—mostly in Chicago—for many years, and at length created something of a sensation, not only by becoming a producer, but by the novelty and magnitude of his productions. Furthermore, he had excited admiration of his nerve (on the part of Eastern commentators, at least) by locating these rather colossal creations in Chicago, instead of New York. He gave America something new—great extravaganzas based upon old nursery and Arabian Nights' legends. The idea was being developed in England from the old Christmas pantomimes, but Henderson endeavored to make his productions even more gorgeous and costly than the English ones. The first one of the series, *Aladdin, or the Wonderful Lamp,* was in progress when he engaged me, but was just about to be superseded by the second one, *The Crystal Slipper.*

Henderson's plan was to open a new production in Chicago at the beginning of the summer, run it there until fall or early winter and then send it on tour. *The Crystal Slipper* opened at the Chi-

cago Opera House about the first of June, 1888. The old-timers and the folk now middle-aged who saw it as children will recall that it was a burlesqued and elaborated version of the story of Cinderella. In it Cinderella (played by Marguerite Fish) was represented as a little slavey in the kitchen of the castle of the Baron von Anthracite (R. E. Graham), and her only friends being the Baron's valet, Yosemite (myself) and Thomas Cat, played by the famous animal impersonator George Ali, who spent almost his entire career inside a caricatured imitation of some animal's skin.

The Prince (whose name was for the first time revealed by our librettist as having been Polydore von Prettiwitz) was played during a portion of the run by May Yohe, a lady who was very much in the public eye for several years because of her matrimonial and other exploits, occasionally among the European nobility. For a time she was the wife of Lord Francis Hope and wore the famous Hope diamond, regarding which so many fanciful yarns were written. Louise Montague, generally regarded as one of the greatest beauties of her time—and a fine woman as well—also played the Prince for a while, likewise appearing in some of the other Henderson productions.

Two comedians who made a decided hit in this show were James E. Sullivan and Harry Kelly as

the court flunkies. There began for me a long association with Jimmy Sullivan which lasted through many other troupes and plays, and a close friendship which has persisted to this day, when Jimmy is my not very distant neighbor on the Boston Post Road.

It may surprise some folks today when I assure them that we achieved many beautiful lighting effects in those productions of nearly forty years ago. I myself was astonished even then to learn that the first one to attempt the use of electricity in a spectacular way was Dion Boucicault, and that he did it as far back as 1873. His stunt was the use of electrically charged wands which were to give forth lightning-like flashes when ballet girls touched them to each other. But the girls of that day were of course wholly ignorant of the tricks of electricity, and they handled their wands so carelessly that some of them received shocks which fairly knocked them off their feet; whereupon they flatly refused to have any more to do with the villainous stuff.

Ten, yes, even fifteen and twenty years after Edison invented the incandescent light in 1878, many theatres were still lighted by gas or by several of those big old, flickering, chattering arc lights. But the incandescent lamp opened up some wonderful possibilities for stage lighting, and Henderson ex-

perimented with it to the very limit of the knowledge of his time, though for brilliant effects he still depended largely on the so-called calcium light. There were some gorgeous stage pictures in his plays such as are very seldom seen nowadays. Even as early in his series as *The Crystal Slipper,* the "Transcendental Transformations," so called, would be matters of pride to a producer of 1926—"The Hall of Time," "The Fairy Wishbone," "Cupid's Clock," "The Wondrous Fan" and the "Prismatic Marble Fountains" for example; not to speak of such group performances as the Dolls' Quadrille, the Mother Goose Divertisements (Four and Twenty Blackbirds, Jack and Jill, Little Boy Blue, Little Bo-Peep, A Frog He Would a-Wooing Go, etc.) and the Grand Banquet Ballet, with its triumphal entry of the animated gold and silver Knives and Forks, Cups, Flagons and Epergnes, the Menu printed on Satin, the Oysters on the Half Shell, the Ice Cream (Cherry and Pistachio, Lemon and Chocolate), the Champagne Sec, Chartreuse, Café Noir and so on.

With costs as they are today, a producer seldom cares to attempt anything like that even for a New York run; and as for sending such a thing on the road—as Henderson did all his shows, with a personnel of two hundred or more—it would lose hundreds, perhaps thousands of dollars a day. Morris



EDDIE FOY AS CASSIM IN "ALI BABA"

Gest's *Mecca,* some five or six years ago, was the last venture along this line; even it was not as elaborate as the Henderson shows, and Mr. Gest has not cared to tackle anything of the kind since.

From the time when I entered the Henderson company, I used the clownish facial makeup which became a sort of trademark with me. My funmaking in *The Crystal Slipper* seemed to go over with a bang from the very beginning. Henderson would agree to give me only $65 a week at the start. One month later he raised the figure without warning to $150. The following year when we put on *Bluebeard* he jumped it to $250—still later to $350—but enough of that for the present. At last I was tasting real success, and I had hard work to keep it from going to my head. If I was a bit exuberant and caused the story to get out that I was hard to manage, there was some excuse for me in the fact that I was experiencing an irresistible reaction from my poverty-stricken boyhood and youth and those years when I was plugging along in the concert halls, physically comfortable but spiritually unsatisfied.

As *The Crystal Slipper* was succeeded by *Bluebeard, Sinbad* and *Ali Baba,* with occasional revivals of the earlier numbers interspersed, I could not but be happy in a success which, though in an unexpected line, was of a quality and completeness

such as I had hoped for and dreamed of since boyhood; not only financial success, but the ecstatic laughter of grown-ups and little children and the admission of critics that "I don't know why I laugh at him, but I do;" all just as legitimate matters of pride to the comedian as are the breathless silence and the thunderous applause which reward the exponents of tragedy. I savored the joy of being able to move thousands to laughter merely by a gesture, a twist of the countenance. I learned to feel an audience's pulse, as it were, and when I had them laughing hilariously, to prolong it just by walking across the stage with that slow swagger and sad grin which had become sort of copyrighted gestures of mine.

In the first flush of this success I was married again—and once more to an actress; a beautiful girl named Lola Sefton who stole out with me quietly one day in Cincinnati and became my wife. I bought a home in Chicago for my mother—a comfortable and really handsome place, finer than any she had ever lived in before. She was still half-seriously, half-jestingly inclined to deride my style of acting, and could not believe that such foolery would hold the public's favor for very long. But when my back was turned, she was my ardent and unflinching champion.

I invited her and my sister to see the show one

night; I think it was while we were playing *Sinbad*. Mother happened to sit next to two young men who didn't admire my work and who roasted me unsparingly.

"How does this fellow Foy get his vogue?" they asked each other. "Why, they're naming hats and cigars after him! I can't figure it out. He's terrible! Just walks around and grins like an idiot," etc., etc.

Mother stood it as long as she could. Finally, bursting with indignation but restraining herself nobly, she turned to them and said with great dignity, "Gentlemen — that's my son ye're talking about. You may not like him, but I want to tell you that he's a good boy and has never forgotten his mother and sisters. He has taken care of us or helped to do it almost ever since he was a child. I don't know how good an actor he is, but I do know that he's a good son!"

And that was that. The flabbergasted young men stammered an apology, and uttered not another word during the evening.

After the show I took Mother and Mary to supper, and spared no expense to make it a fine one. When the waiter brought in a silver pail full of cracked ice with a bottle reposing therein, Mother asked, "What's that?"

"Champagne!" I told her; and then as she sipped it critically, "Three dollars a bottle."

"To think of it!" she exclaimed, setting her glass down and looking disapprovingly at it. "Such extravagance! Better be saving your money, Eddie, while it's coming. Make hay while the sun shines. Some day soon they'll find ye out, and then this big income will stop."

She failed not to tease me on many occasions about these matters. On Christmas Day shortly thereafter I was at her home, and Mary, who had just compounded the Yuletide egg-nog, invited me to join her in a glass.

"Egg-nog!" exclaimed Mother in good-natured sarcasm. "Is it egg-nog ye're offering that fine gentleman? Don't you know he drinks nothing but champagne—at three dollars the bottle?"

It was always a mooted question in Chicago, when a new Henderson show was opened, as to whether or not it was better than the last one. At least there must be little or no excuse given to say it wasn't just as good; so Henderson and his coworkers were kept busy cudgelling their brains and scouring Europe for new ballets, new ideas in costumes, new effects. In *Bluebeard,* which followed *The Crystal Slipper,* the settings and costuming were if possible more gorgeous than in the former productions. In the wedding scene of Bluebeard and Fatima, two hundred persons appeared, most of them in shining armor. The great finale, "Truth

and Light," the grand ballet, "The Light of Asia," the Ballet of Birds and Insects, the "Glittering Grotto of Fantastic Fancy," wherein appeared Jack the Giant Killer, Puss in Boots, the Babes in the Wood, and Old Woman who Lived in a Shoe and other nursery notables, were all remarkable creations.

In the latter group a number of children were used. When the show reached New York on tour, the Gerry Society prohibited our letting the children appear; so the giant shoe, from which a swarm of little ones had been wont to appear was wheeled on the stage empty, with a placard on its side announcing that "The little children are prohibited by order of Elbridge T. Gerry"—towards whom the audience at once manifested its displeasure in emphatic manner.

Frank B. Blair had the part of Bluebeard, Arthur Dunn was Mufti, I was O'Mahdi Benzini, father of Fatima, Edith Murilla played Fatima, Esther Williams, (who had been with me at the Alcazar in San Francisco) and later Topsy Venn, played Ayesha. Willie Collier and Jimmy Sullivan, as Asta Gazonda and Asta Gazoof, the twin chiefs of police, won many laughs. Later Lee Harrison took Collier's place.

One can to a certain extent trace history, fashions and scientific progress by the songs and jokes

in the comedies of successive periods. Just at the moment I was thinking of my "Nickel in the Slot" song in *Bluebeard*. Slot machines, into which you dropped a coin and from which thereupon you drew various commodities, from the playing of a phonograph record to a stick of chewing gum, had just been invented and were still something of a curiosity, especially in the smaller towns.

It's a terrible thing to be a critic; it gives one so many opportunities for saying idiotic things. For delicious condescension springing from a delightfully fallacious presumption of superiority, the remarks of the critic of the New York *Sun* when we opened at Niblo's that winter constitute a classic:—

"The Chicago gentlemen who conceived and capitalized *Bluebeard, Jr.,* came into the metropolis with a fear that their spectacle might be condemned by the critics solely on account of its Western origin. In this they were foolish. New York is eminently courteous and kind. The Chicago spectacle is gorgeous to extravagance, and though it lacks the refinement of taste which would naturally characterize an Eastern production, it still compels admiration and encouragement."

Now, setting aside the question whether Chicago's taste was necessarily lower than New York's,



LOLA SEFTON, THE SECOND MRS. FOY

let us see just why the production must necessarily have that raw Western flavor.

As a matter of fact, the only Western taint that could possibly be found in it was the libretto, written by Clay Greene of California. The music was furnished by John Braham, Fred J. Eustis and Richard Maddern, who wrote many of the things which sprang into being in New York. The scenery was painted by Voegtlin, Hoyt, and Albert, three of the greatest in America and all in Eastern studios. The costumes and armor were designed by Arthur Chasemore of London, who had for years been doing the same for England's great spectacles. The costumes were made by Dazian, New York's great theatrical costumer, and the armor was made by Kennedys of Birmingham, England. The dances were arranged by M. Bibeyran, prominent European ballet master, and Richard Barker, who had staged all the Gilbert and Sullivan operas from *Pinafore* to *Yeoman of the Guard,* and later had been staging the big London pantomimes, came over from England each year to direct not only *Bluebeard* but all the other Henderson shows. For some of the spectacles—*Sinbad* and *Ali Baba,* for example—the costumes all came from England and the armor from France.

The two burlesques just named followed *Blue-*

beard, interspersed with revivals of the earlier plays. *Ali Baba; or Morgiana and the Forty Thieves* was noteworthy because of its holding the boards in Chicago during the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, when it probably had a greater and more varied attendance than any of the other Henderson shows. Exposition visitors considered it as important that summer to visit the Chicago Opera House and see *Ali Baba* as to visit the Midway or the Palace of Varied Industries.

That exposition, the most colossal that America had yet seen, drew visitors from every corner of the continent. An exposition was a greater event in our lives then than it is now. Hundreds of people from the West came to see me that summer, many old friends from Frisco or Dodge or the mining camps who formerly knew me as Eddie, but some of whom now exhibited an embarrassed tendency to call me Mr. Foy, and others whom I did not recall, informing me that "I saw you in Leadville in '79"—or in Butte or Denver or Tombstone. To many village dwellers who seldom or never saw a real play in their ordinary routine, *Ali Baba* was a life's high-water mark. And it was a beautiful and wondrous spectacle—the gorgeous Ballet of Jewels, the Monster of the Cavern, a great dragon which crawled across the stage, the waterfall of real water which cascaded down over waterproof

canvas rocks, the curtain of steam rising from jets near the footlights—all these were things to be marvelled at, even by city dwellers. But after more than thirty years I still meet people whose pleasantest recollection of the show seems to be that of having heard me, "during that summer of the World's Fair," sing "The Cat Came Back."

Of course story and characterization didn't, as a rule, count very strongly in these shows. In this one I played Cassim, a vagabond, Ali Baba's brother. Henry Norman, a fine basso, played Arraby Gorrah, Chief of the Bagdad Police; Joe Doner was Alibazan, "the best Caliph Bagdad ever had, elected on the platform, 'The Forty Thieves must go:'" George Ali this time represented a donkey; and when he got me down and trampled me and I remarked, "That's a horse on me!" great was the laughter at this comic picturization of a popular slang phrase of the period. It was in *Ali Baba* that I sang one of the earliest of Charles K. Harris's songs to reach the stage. Soon after that he wrote "After the Ball" and became famous.

In the fall of '93, just as the exposition was closing, *Sinbad* was revived, and ran through the winter at home and on tour. We had a fine cast—Henry Norman as Snarleyyow, Joseph Doner as the Old Man of the Sea, W. M. Armstrong, Louise

Royce, Frankie Raymond, Ada Deaves and others. Jimmy Sullivan came back to us, and he and I did a turn in blackface as the Queen and King of the Cannibal Isles, in the course of which we sang the popular song, "Mamie, Come Kiss Your Honey Boy." Other famous songs in that show which middle-aged folk will recall with wistful reminiscence were "She Never Cares to Wander," "When Summer Comes Again," "The Pride of the Ball," and "Back Among the Old Folks."

It is amusing to read now in my old clippings, a stray critical reference here and there to the "scantiness" of costume in the chorus of those shows. When it is remembered that no chorus girl of the Nineties ever appeared without the body and limbs covered—the latter at least by tights, the former by something slightly more substantial; when we are reminded that a single bare leg in those days would have brought the police on the run and possibly closed the show, we may be certain that just one glimpse of the nudities on Broadway today would have caused a dramatic critic of thirty years ago to fall in a dead faint.

XIX

THE year 1894 was an unpleasantly eventful one for me. In the spring that rather hard-boiled gentleman, Mr. Henderson, and I quarrelled as a result of my suggestion for a raise in salary, and my six years' service with him came to an end. When Henderson made a decision and announced it, adamant was thereafter like custard pie as compared with him. For my part, I had no qualms of conscience. I had given him my best. In proof thereof I have in my scrap book at least two newspaper articles written at divers times thereafter, in which dramatic critics in a reminiscent mood remark that "Foy made a fortune for Henderson in Chicago." Dramatic critics may make slight errors in judgment sometimes, but in this case I am convinced that these astute and scholarly gentlemen knew what they were talking about. It might appear invidious in me to point out that the Henderson extravaganzas didn't prosper nor continue long after I left the company, so I won't mention it.

Those six years had been years of unqualified success, even of triumph; years of freedom from

business or financial worry—save on certain occasions when I picked the wrong horse. I was now destined to have a few years of not quite so easy sledding.

Some Chicago capitalists at once began organizing a company to produce spectacular musical comedies on a slightly less pretentious scale with myself as the star. A comedy was written for us by John Gilbert and christened "Off the Earth," the scene of the action being laid in (or on—which is it?) the moon. We took with us several players who had appeared in the Henderson shows—Louise Montague, Joe Doner, Kate Uart, a statuesque beauty whose unfortunate surname was usually twisted by the compositors into Mart or Hart, sometimes even Nart; George Ali, who in the new piece was to masquerade in a lion's skin, and others.

The backers of the new show determined to do the thing up brown by importing scenery, costumes and dancers from Europe; and I was delegated as the connoisseur to go over and select them. I accordingly set sail from New York late in June, not without some misgivings, for my first voyage on the ocean.

I was much cheered to find that the genial Nat Goodwin was one of my fellow passengers. I began to experience qualms which seemed to indicate

seasickness on the first evening out, when we were scarcely out of sight of American shores, and Nat, learning of it, took me down to his stateroom, which he shared with a Brooklyn man, to give me a preventive. He had a remarkable medicine and first aid chest made of mahogany, inlaid, which he said had cost $250. It was fitted up with row upon row of vials full of liquids and powders. Most of the powders which I observed were white in color.

"One has to be careful about this dosing business," explained Nat, as he fingered over the bottles. "Now this——" and he lifted one of the vials of white powder, "would send you scooting up the golden stairs, pronto."

"What the deuce have you got such a thing in your medicine cabinet for?" I demanded in some anxiety.

"It's necessary," he declared. "It's strychnine; and taken in small quantities, strychnine is an excellent stimulant when the heart action is weak. But beware taking too much."

He selected another vial of white stuff and said, "Here; a little of this will settle your stomach and ward off your seasickness."

I was a bit skittish. Nat was not only so notorious a joker that he was quite capable of feeding me

ipecac, but he was also a fallible human being, and I wanted him to be careful and certain as to what he was giving me.

"You take a dose of it first," I stipulated, "and I'll join you."

Though somewhat contemptuous at my skepticism, he measured out nearly a teaspoonful of the stuff, and under my close inspection, dissolved it in a glass of water and drank it. I thereupon did the same.

After talking to him a while, I went up into the main saloon. I was sitting there reading about half an hour later when suddenly Goodwin's roommate came rushing by with anxiety depicted on his face.

"Have you seen the ship's doctor?" he asked.

"What's the matter?" I exclaimed, though I had premonitions already.

"Goodwin's dreadfully ill," said he. "Sort of convulsions."

"Good Lord!" I moaned. "Just as I expected! Now he's poisoned himself, and what's worse, he's poisoned me, too."

I suddenly noticed that I had unmistakable symptoms of illness—had had them for several minutes. I got to my feet with difficulty and tottered to my stateroom. Falling into my berth I sent an urgent call for the doctor. Why had I been so sapheaded as to swallow that stuff at the direction

of a bungling idiot like Nat Goodwin? What could he have given me? Prussic acid, like as not. Served him right if he passed out. His demise would mean no loss to society, but I felt that my own would be highly untimely just at that moment—me on that important mission and all.

Meanwhile, I was getting rid of my dinner and seemingly everything else I had eaten for weeks past. I fancied that my convulsions closely resembled those of Goodwin. Why in Heaven's name didn't that doctor come? Ah, here he was after hours of delay!

"What's the matter?" he inquired, casually.

"I'm dying, doc," I whispered. "Nat Goodwin poisoned me—by accident, of course."

"What's that? he snapped, with a startled look on his face.

I reported the circumstance.

"He didn't mention that to me," said the doctor. "Just wait a minute," and he ran down the corridor to Goodwin's stateroom. In three or four minutes he came back.

"Is he dead?" I asked.

"Dead! Hell, no! Neither of you chumps is going to die. You're too tough!"

"What did he give me?"

"Nothing in the world but bicarbonate of soda."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive!"

"Then what's the matter with him?"

"Just common seasickness."

"And me?"

"The same, plus imagination."

"His remedy wasn't worth a cuss, then?"

"A darned sight less than that."

I was somewhat comforted in mind, but my bodily affliction didn't subside for two days thereafter. It was a great satisfaction to me to find, however, that Nat was in worse case than I was. He was barely able to stagger on deck just as we were coming in sight of port.

Having been in London before, Nat undertook to show me around a bit, and accumulated a fine store of yarns to tell on me when he came back. I own up to the yellow shoes on the night he took me to dinner at a fashionable club; never having been a social lion, I didn't possess any patent leathers; but I hereby take occasion to deny the rest of the calumnies that he perpetrated about me, no matter whether I've yet heard them all or not.

I ordered a quantity of scenery and costumes in London, and engaged thirty-five ballet girls for our show. Some may wonder why we couldn't get these people in America. The fact is that we wanted dancers skilled in pantomime—to a certain extent interpretative dancers. England surpassed



EDDIE FOY IN "HOTEL TOPSY-TURVEY"

us in that art at the time, and as far as our musical comedy choruses are concerned, probably does it yet. Incidentally, one of those girls whom I brought over married Joe Doner, the actor, and became the mother of Kitty Doner. I therefore claim some small portion of the credit for the present existence of a very charming artist and woman.

From London I went over to Paris, and was met at the railway station by the American billiard players, Schaeffer, Ives, and Catton, who were then conducting a French invasion. Billiards has always been my favorite indoor sport; when in Chicago I was in the habit of spending a great deal of my spare time around Jake Schaeffer's and other leading halls, and was acquainted with all the best players in America. In Paris I watched some great billiard tournaments, conducted in circular amphitheatres, with bookmakers going through the crowd, taking bets on the competing players, just as if it had been a horse race. From Paris I made a hurried trip through Switzerland to Italy, where I had some special properties made at Milan, and engaged two Italian star dancers, one of them being Madeline Morando, a remarkable artist and a fine woman, who had been première danseuse in the Henderson company through several productions, but had left it some time before and gone home to Italy.

We opened our new show with great éclat early in the fall, and critics and public were very kind to us; but I was destined to suffer another blow before the year was out. My wife presented me with a daughter whom we named Catherine; but the shock was too much for the mother, and she died a short time afterwards. My sister Mary took charge of the baby, and for years thereafter gave her a real maternal love and care. She deserves most of the credit for making Catherine the fine woman she is.

My wife's death took the heart out of my work for a time; but the comedian is never allowed to sorrow long. The funeral baked meats are not cold before he must be back with painted face, grimacing under the spotlight, and woe be unto him if he fails to make the patrons laugh!

Off the Earth was an exquisite spectacle to the eye, but it did not have sufficient originality—sufficient genius, let us say—to insure it a great success. Nevertheless, we made a fairly good season out of it.

At the beginning of the following summer my backers launched a new production, *Little Robinson Crusoe,* a broad burlesque of Defoe's story; and it cannot be said that they didn't assemble an able cast. Adele Farrington played Crusoe and Frank H. White, Friday. Marie Dressler was

Ophelia Crusoe, landlady of a summer hotel; Marie Cahill was Polly Perkins, a soubrette rôle, Jimmy Sullivan was Hockstein, a pawnbroker, Henry Norman was Tuffanuff, a very heavy pirate, while I represented Dare-Devil Willie, another breed of pirate. I made a novel entrance in the first act, coming in on a canal boat drawn by a donkey, which was ridden by a diminutive pickaninny. I had a song which became famous in those days—"Let Me Off at Buffalo." Another song hit was sung by a boy in the gallery who was supposed to have been hypnotized from the stage—"Only One Girl in This World for Me."

I had by this time built up a clientele throughout the country and especially in the middle West, who liked my work and came to see me without always inquiring particularly in advance about the show. Some hint of the attitude of this following may be found in a criticism of *Little Robinson Crusoe* in the Indianapolis *Journal*. The writer complains that my entrance at the beginning of the play was delayed too long—and goes on:

"This defect should be remedied before the show is a week older. In the towns where Foy has become a drawing card, as he has undoubtedly in this city, the curiosity of every one is keyed up and all are anxious to see the buffoon solitaire and what new outlandish dress he may choose to appear in. An

audience may enjoy an opening chorus and find a certain delight in admiring the beautifully costumed chorus girls or listening to a brief introduction of the story of the extravaganza, but the one great feature they come to see is Foy, and he should be shot on the stage at the very earliest opportunity.

"Consistency doesn't matter, as was demonstrated in *Off the Earth,* furthermore, no one expects anything consistent from Foy. Let there be a ghost of a reason for anything he may do, and it is robbed of half its charm. Foy, unadulterated and bubbling over with his original clownishness, is a show all in himself. He is full of surprises. His acts strike one suddenly, in effect similar to that produced by touching the spring of those little Christmas boxes that contain a painted jumping-jack. His stage face reminds one of a cat suffering with colic, and the more misery he puts into it, the more the people laugh. There is only one such on the American stage. In his line the Chicago burlesquer stands alone and unapproached. It is for these reasons that he should be allowed to introduce himself early. One ridiculous song from Foy, and then the thirsty seekers for amusement are content to let the show go on apace, giving the other characters a chance."

That Cincinnati was another of my middle-Western strongholds is proven by the following

regarding the same play from the *Commercial Gazette* of September 23d, '95:

". . . Foy's battered phiz had scarcely become visible when a burst of applause came from all parts of the house, in volume and continuance the most astonishing heard in a Cincinnati theatre since the opening of the season. It is a welcome that might well be termed an ovation, and the over-pleased comedian was kept bowing for many minutes before he dared attempt the speaking of his lines. Account for it any way you will, the fact remains that Mr. Foy is the most popular comedian who makes his annual curtsey to the Cincinnati public. No such demonstration as that of last night has ever followed the appearance of any star or favorite within recent years."

But the critic then goes on to say that the play which followed was something of a disappointment. I suffered no little detriment about this time from inadequate vehicles. *Little Robinson Crusoe* received some high praise here and there throughout the country, but it was not a highly successful effort. It closed at the end of 1895, after a career of about seven months. I then made a mistake by going out in a play called *The Strange Adventures of Miss Brown,* in which I masqueraded for a portion of the time as a woman. The less said about that affair, the better.

I had felt all along that the idea and the setting of *Off the Earth* had never had a fair chance, and so, in the fall of 1896 I promoted a revival of it, Jimmy Sullivan and I—along with others—investing some cash in it. We used the scenery and effects of the former production, but endeavored to brighten up the music and the book.I felt so certain of the success of the piece that I ventured to get married—my bride none other than Madeline Morando, the dancer whom I had first met eight years before when I entered the cast of *The Crystal Slipper*. My experience would seem to indicate that contrary to widespread popular opinion, a danseuse is one of the best bets imaginable when choosing a wife—as I hope to show later on.

Jimmy Sullivan was director, stage manager and straight comedian in this piece, acting as an efficient foil to me. He and I frequently had a lot of fun in gagging and surprising each other with impromptu stuff, and made the audience like it, too. On one occasion we held the stage for forty-five minutes, using some rehearsed material but a great many bits that were devised on the spur of the moment. We had the crowd laughing uproariously, and we kept it up until we tired of the fun and let the show go on. Jimmy and I claim to have originated that gag which became so justly popular in vaudeville in the years that followed, "Have

you ever played *Virginius?*" "No, but I have played West Virginius"—though some historians deny us this honor, one even asserting that there is evidence that this joke was in use as far back as the opening of the Christy Minstrels in New York in 1843.

Jimmy and I fought side by side through many less humorous battles — with theatre managers, stage hands, hotel clerks, baggagemen, sheriffs and constables—yes, even with officers of the law; for there were times when financial disaster threatened to swamp the company and me.

Our worst troubles of this sort were up in Wisconsin and Minnesota, where we ran into some streaks of bad business. I reached such a pitch of acute perception that I could tell one of those whiskered Wisconsin sheriffs as far as I could see him; and in my hotel room, whenever I heard the clump of heavy boots coming along the corridor, I felt sure it was a minion of the law coming to serve another paper on me. They crawled through windows to serve writs, and they shoved them under doors and through transoms. It got so that when we entered a county, the sheriff met us at the boundary line and stayed with us until we left, collecting the box office receipts.

Of course the ghost didn't walk regularly, but most of the company stuck by me nobly and got

along as best they could on what little I could dole out. I even lost my lavender trousers, which were almost essential to my dignity. In those days a pair of delicately-tinted lavender trousers was practically a badge of the thespian profession. But a waitress in a small-town hotel spilled a plate of hot soup over mine, and as I couldn't afford to buy another pair, I was forced to dress in ordinary civilian clothes.

We were in one county more than a week because we couldn't get away, and in a desperate attempt to fill in the time, we played practically every town in the county. The sheriff stayed with us all the time and boarded off us, and I don't think I have ever seen another man who could eat as much.

Finally I had almost reached the point of suggesting that we make still shorter jumps and walk between towns. We had opened up the show one evening to a moderately good house, considering the fact that the night was stormy. The sheriff was sitting in the front row with the evening's receipts in his pocket. He had seen the show four or five times, but still seemed to enjoy it. Violent squalls of wind came up now and then and fairly shook the building. During the first act I was on the stage with Mary Marble, singing "The Blow Almost Killed Father," when there came a terrific blast of wind, a ripping sound, a prolonged crash,

and bricks and plaster began raining down around us. Glancing upward, I looked right out into the deep, dark blue sky. A portion of the roof had been blown off!

The audience was already jamming the exits in a wild rush, not only to escape from the building but also to learn whether their homes were still standing. It seemed best and cheapest to let them go. The most fortunate part of the whole affair was that the sheriff vanished from that moment. We packed up, took down our scenery and scraped together enough money to steal away on an early morning train—before dawn, in fact—right out from under a writ. Soon after that, business brightened up a bit and we got on our feet again.

We had battles of other varieties, too. I shall never forget an experience at a certain town in Georgia. They had an outfit of Negro stage hands and hangers-on at the city's theatre who were a notoriously tough bunch. They had at various times sent two or three people to the hospital, and why they were tolerated by the management and the town I have never been able to understand.

This gang, numbering about eight or ten, some of whom were drones, gathered in a corner outside the dressing rooms just before the show began and started a crap game on the floor, accompanying it with a stream of such boisterous profanity and

obscenity that Sullivan asked them to desist. They paid no attention to him, and he complained again and more pointedly. Still the nuisance went on; and finally Sullivan strode out of his dressing room and said with considerable vigor; "Now, see here! You fellows will either cut out that rough stuff or stop this game and get out of here!"

At that, one of the toughs nearest him rose up at him threateningly, uttering an insulting remark as he did so. Jimmy, who was sort of bad medicine himself when stirred up, promptly hit the fellow a smack on the chin that laid him toes upward. Another came at him, and Jimmy likewise knocked him galley-west. By that time the whole bunch had sprung up, cursing and reaching for their razors.

The whole thing hadn't occupied more than ten seconds. I was in my dressing room, and I realized from the sounds without that a war was on which was apt to prove rather serious for Jimmy and for all of us. Suddenly I jerked open my door and stepped out into the dimly-lighted corridor. Paraphrasing Stonewall Jackson's legendary command regarding Barbara Frietchie, I roared in my most tremendous voice, "Whoever touches a hair of that man's head dies like a dog!"

This pompous proclamation gave them pause; and coupled with the fact that in the very dim light in which I stood I seemed to have a nickeled auto-

matic pistol trained on them, it threw those darkies into panic. They trampled each other under foot and nearly tore a door out of the casing in their scramble to get away. I shudder to think what would have happened had any of them gotten close enough to see that my "weapon" was nothing but a rectangular cake of light-colored soap held pistol-wise.

People advised us to go armed that night or else have a bodyguard and go in by the front door. But we disregarded all warnings and swaggered in by the stage entrance with our hats over our ears, and were greeted with ludicrous deference. "Yas-suh, Mr. Foy!" "All right, suh, Mr. Sullivan!" were the replies to our every command and wish. We heard afterwards that we were regarded by that house staff as two of the most desperate Irishmen they had ever encountered.

After we had done with *Off the Earth,* Sullivan went to England along with Edna May, Dan Daly, Phyllis Rankin, Harry Davenport and others in that famous comedy, *The Belle of New York,* which took London by storm, and the press notices show that he made probably the greatest hit ever made in England by an American comedian. Of course I ought in simple justice to myself to mention the fact that I never played in England.

I now toured a season for Klaw & Erlanger

in a revue called *Gay New York*. In 1898 Charlie Evans, the comedian (old-timers will all remember Evans and Hoey in *A Parlor Match*), who had blossomed out as a producer, put on a French musical farce, *Hotel Topsy Turvey,* in which I had some success as the leading comedy character, a chef. There was much amusing business in this piece—stunts, for example, like the clock which threw up its hands to 12 when I pointed a pistol at it—some of which I worked out myself. The show took well on the road and lasted through the better part of two seasons.

I now removed my home from Chicago to New York. Once more I was seeking to conquer the East. I was determined to make myself as solid on Broadway as I felt myself to be in Chicago and the middle West. Moving my place of residence now meant more than formerly, for I had a growing family; in addition to the daughter Catherine, I now had two boys, Bryan and Charles, just two years apart in age. The name of the eldest will indicate that I was an enthusiastic subscriber to the free silver doctrine of the latter Nineties. It occurred to me that if silver had been freer, I wouldn't have suffered so much worry during the run of *Off the Earth.*

New York at the "turn of the century" was a very different Gotham from what it is today. In

fact, it is changing so rapidly nowadays that a man who has been absent from it as much as three years doesn't recognize it when he comes back. In those days the Rialto extended from tree-shaded Longacre Square (where a genial little two-story eat-and-drink shop stood on the site of the Times flat-iron of today) down Broadway to Herald Square and beyond. Rector's flourished on the east side of Longacre, the St. Cloud and the Metropole at the south end; the great Augustin Daly's Theatre and the Empire Theatre with its stock company were two of the standard temples of the drama for the Nation. Fifth Avenue was still the home of the old Knickerbocker aristocracy. Diamond Jim Brady, perhaps the greatest eater the world has ever known, Boss Croker, Chief Devery, Dr. Parkhurst, John L. Sullivan, Jim Jeffries, Kid McCoy, Billy Considine, Parson Davies, were a few famous figures about town, not to speak of some old friends of mine from farther west who had now reached high rank in their own lines—Jim Corbett, who was running a café down at Herald Square, Billy Jerome, at the zenith of his career as a song and opera writer, Bat Masterson, engaged mostly in newspaper work but pausing here and there to referee a boxing bout or hold stakes. Up and down the Rialto one saw many famous thespians now dead—Joe Jefferson, James A. Herne, Richard

Mansfield, Maurice Barrymore, Nat Goodwin, Roland Reed, Pete Dailey, Walter Hale, Henry Miller, Jerome Sykes, Dan Daly, Lillian Russell, Ada Rehan, Helena Modjeska, and now and then Irving, Bernhardt, and Duse—to name only a few.

A great old chap was Dan Daly; tall, thin, with a solemn, square-cut countenance which Britishers, when they saw him in *The Belle of New York,* declared with almost unanimous voice to be a living replica of the Duke of Wellington. Dan and I paid two memorable "calls" on each other one week in Pittsburgh. In those days musical comedy and revue stars now and then slipped away of an evening between acts or between appearances on the stage, rushed across in full makeup to a theatre where some friend was performing, and without warning strode out on his stage to do a turn or swap gags with him for a few moments and then break away. I don't mean to say that this was done frequently; I could almost count all the episodes of the kind that I remember on the fingers of one hand; but whenever such a thing happened, it tickled the audience thus favored enormously.

Early that week in Pittsburgh I popped into Dan's show one evening at the point where he was doing one of his solemn dances, and began to dance around and with him as earnestly yet nonchalantly as if I belonged there. We stopped presently,

kidded each other for a few moments, and I withdrew.

On the very next evening, I think it was, Dan was going through his stuff when three strange young women burst out on the stage and began doing a whirlwind dance around him. After the first dazed moment he recognized two of them as his sisters, Lucy and Lizzie, well-known performers, but the third and wildest dancer, a miss in her teens, was a stranger to him. Not until the act was over did he learn that it was Lizzie's daughter, Vinie, whom he hadn't seen since she was a baby. Vinie Daly later became one of the most famous members of the family.

That stunt gave Dan an idea. At the next intermission he hurried over to my theatre and sauntered out into the very middle of one of my best turns. I was rather expecting the visit and was ready for him with some gags and repartee; but I was unprepared for the three strenuous young women who suddenly erupted upon us in a storm of billowy skirts, dancing, whirling, kicking so close to my head and eyes that it kept me dodging for safety. The call was a bit embarrassing to me, for the Daly family made such a hit that the audience almost refused to be reconciled when they insisted on leaving.

One of the millions of mysterious happenings in

the history of human psychology is that strange mental twist which seized upon Dan not so long after this and caused him to subsist during the last two years of his life entirely on snails. This was common gossip at the time, and George Rector, who furnished the snails, has since confirmed it. Dan ate nothing at all during the day, but after the show, along towards midnight, he would go up to Rector's and absorb about a quart of snails and a quart of champagne. How he lived as long as he did on such a diet I can't imagine.

I made a real Broadway hit (and that under difficulties) in *The Strollers,* a musical affair, the idea for which Jimmy Sullivan had picked up in Europe. It was adapted by Harry B. Smith and Ludwig Englander, and opened in 1901. At the beginning, somewhat to my discomfiture, I had to share honors in the cast with Francis Wilson; in fact, was overshadowed by him. But in a short time he dropped out of the company, and thereafter I had things my own way, though I continued to play the same part, that of Kamfer, a jailer. D. L. Don, Marie George and Irene Bentley were other funmakers in the cast.

I was now officially "rediscovered" by New York. One metropolitan writer remarked that after leaving Henderson I had "dropped out of sight for five or six years"—a sample of New York's cheer-



MADELINE MORANDO, THE THIRD MRS. FOY

ful ignorance of what is going on outside of New York. If you aren't on Broadway, smashing 'em in the eye every season, the Wise Men of Gotham placidly assume that you do not exist. Consider the case of Robert Mantell, for example. He was kept out of New York for several years by some legal difficulty or other; when he finally got this settled and appeared in the metropolis again, a goodly portion of the populace couldn't remember ever having heard of him before, and thought he must be a foreigner.

Early in 1902 I was switched to a new show, *The Wild Rose,* in which I played the part of Paracelsus Noodle, a travelling hypnotist. I was backed up by a strong cast, including Albert Hart, Junie McCree, Irene Bentley, Marie Cahill and the diminutive Marguerite Clark—then still unknown to fame, but rapidly making her way—who theoretically represented a French army lieutenant. I cannot say that she looked very militant, but she was tremendously fetching. And here was good old George Ali with me again, this time as a very comical bear.

This was the show which Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt hired for one night at a fee of $5,000—a great sum even in those recent days—and put on in her mansion in Newport for the entertainment of her friends. A good time was had by all, even by

the players, who were so lauded and admired and fed on rich viands that they found it difficult to come back to earth again. On that evening, for the only time in my life I grasped with my own grimy, toil-hardened mitt so many of the variously royal and noble, lily-white hands of Vanderbilts, Astors, Goelets, Belmonts, Cuttings, Iselins, Webbs and so on that I felt like a millionaire myself—until I awoke a few hours later and found no gold dust adhering to my palm from the contact. I even began to doubt gloomily what would be my reception if I should go to one of my enthusiastic friends of that evening and ask for the loan of a paltry thousand dollars without security.

I was now sufficiently at home on Broadway to follow my own bent to the utmost, just as I had formerly done at Chicago. I had always enjoyed putting a certain amount of my own brand of spontaneity into my work, and I found that the audiences liked it, too. By this I mean doing the unexpected thing—sometimes stepping down on to the orchestra piano to dance a bit—joking with the boys in the gallery or with some friend in the audience—introducing gags upon the occasion of some unexpected occurrence instead of trying to cover it up or sidestep it. I remember once at a town in Indiana, it was necessary to hang our back drop squarely against the rear wall of the theatre,

so that one could not pass behind it. I made an exit at the right of the stage and was to make an entrance two or three minutes later from the left; so instead of rushing down through the dressing room floor to cross, I just hurried across the front of the stage in a momentary lull, explaining to the audience as I went that I couldn't get across behind the scenery. After a startled moment of silence, the crowd roared with laughter.

This gives a hint of some of my pet theories as to the comedian's art—always keep them guessing; never let them find out how you do it; and strive to do even farce comedy so casually and calmly that they can scarcely believe you are acting. I cannot explain what I have tried to do any better than a critic in the *Dramatic Mirror* once did in telling what, in his opinion, I actually accomplished. I will risk being accused of unusual egotism and quote a portion of his remarks:

"Eddie Foy is the mildest, least obtrusive comedian on the stage. His is the art that conceals art. Many comedians do their laugh-making in the same fashion as a slugger puts his opponent out of breath and vision. They are violently aggressive. They make fun as a whirlwind makes a visit. Both leave the victim stunned and somewhat indignant. —— ——— is the best example of the breathless, don't-stop-for-a-second-or-you're-gone sort. Beside

him Eddie Foy is as grateful as a fragrant zephyr after a sandstorm.

"Foy is as elusive in his way as some of the young women whom Miss Loftus says to imitate is like pursuing thistledown. You get it between your fingers and open them and it isn't there. He defies analysis. It were much easier to say what his art is not than what it is. It does not consist in tumblings nor contortions, therefore has none of the primal qualities of the boa constrictor. . . . It does not owe its success to brass lungs nor megaphone delivery. When you reflect upon what Eddie Foy's art is not, you realize how deep is the art that is to all appearances so narrow. His methods are as gentle as those of a child under the eye of a watchful mother. If he has ever bellowed on the stage, I have never heard him. . . . He has not made a stage reputation by any of nature's trademarks, a glistening dome, nor a startling girth nor a nasal drawl. If he exaggerates any personal trait, it is that air of open-eyed and wondering innocence that sits so well upon him, suggesting a Rip van Winkle after a few days' wandering on Broadway."

XX

AFTER less than a year in "The Wild Rose" I opened on January 21, 1903, what was destined to be the most memorable engagement in my history. Klaw & Erlanger had recently taken up the producing of great extravaganzas—importing the big Drury Lane pantomimes from London and giving them an American farcical touch and a bit of additional lavishness. In splendor of staging and costumes they fairly out-hendersoned Henderson. Their first production of this kind, *The Sleeping Beauty and the Beast,* had just run its course, and now they staged *Mr. Bluebeard.*

In this memorable production, the Sister Anne of the original legend, who had been ruthlessly eliminated from Henderson's version, now appeared as the leading comedy character, and I was assigned to play it. Dan McAvoy at first essayed Bluebeard, but was soon replaced by Harry Gilfoil. Flora Parker was Fatima; Adele Rafter, Selim; Norma Kopp, Abdallah; Bonnie Maginn was Imer Dasher, a Chicago girl; William Danforth, Mustapha and Herbert Cawthorne, Irish Pasha. I was supplied with two excellent songs by

Billy Jerome, "I'm a Poor, Unhappy Maid" and "Hamlet was a Melancholy Dane"; and I had a scene with a comic elephant which seemed to please the patrons greatly.

Newspapers exhausted their stock of adjectives in trying to describe this colossal affair. "Stupendous!" "Magnificent!" "The limit of pictorial stage art has been reached." "Extravagance can go no further." "One of the most gorgeous spectacles ever seen in a theatre"—such were a few of the comments. There was a flying ballet which floated in the air like thistledown. At one point the leader soared from the stage out over the heads of the audience almost to the gallery rail, scattering flowers as she went. That trolley wire upon which she was carried was destined to play a tragic part in the history of the show before the year was out. At another moment in the play a girl on the stage stepped towards the footlights and held out her hands; one of the fairies floated down as gently as a snowflake, alighted thereon and pirouetted without causing the hand to shake.

There were some really wonderful tableaux—"The Valley of Ferns," "Egypt," "India," "Japan," "The Parisian Rose Garden" and "The Triumph of the Fan." The last-named was the most gorgeous of all; hundreds of people on the stage, many in hand-painted costumes and waving scores of huge

fans of ostrich plumes; greater fans of lace and feathers appearing from flies and wings, all illuminated with colored electric bulbs; and above all, the seven aerial dancers, each poised on the points of an illuminated glass star which revolved under the touch of her toes. Some of those fans caught fire at Cleveland and came near precipitating a calamity, but happily were extinguished betimes.

Mr. Bluebeard opened the new Iroquois Theatre in Chicago on November 23, 1903. They made a great celebration of the opening—had elaborate souvenir programs and no little ceremony. The two local stockholder-managers of the theatre, the architect of the building and one or two others made speeches, and certain of the gallery gods called loudly for an oration from me, but the orchestra mercifully drowned their outcries by striking up "America."

The theatre was one of the finest that had yet been built in this country—a palace of marble and plate glass, plush and mahogany and gilding. It had a magnificent promenade foyer, like an old-world palace hall, with a ceiling sixty feet from the floor and grand staircases ascending on either side. Backstage it was far and away the most commodious I had ever seen. The space in the rear allowed for enormous expansion of the stage set-

ting. They must have had as much room back there as, or more than they have in the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. A vast expanse of dressing rooms was provided under the stage and auditorium for the chorus, and the principals dressed on the stage level or above. The flies were reached by elevators. We were told that the theatre was the very last word in efficiency, convenience, and safety. Instead, it proved to be a fools' paradise. There had been no great theatre disaster in this country for many years, and all precautions against such a thing were greatly relaxed.

Chicago having been our home for so many years, I had taken my wife and children with me on this trip and we were stopping at the Sherman. We had an uproarious time with the kids around the holiday season. My mother, then nearing eighty, was not too old to join in the fun. Business was good at the theatre, and life in general seemed to be moving along very satisfactorily.

We drew big crowds all through Christmas week. On Wednesday afternoon, December 30th, at the bargain price matinee, the house was packed and many were standing. I tried to get passes for my wife and youngsters, but failed. It was then decided that I should take only the eldest boy, Bryan, aged six, to the show and stow him wherever I could. I tried to get a seat for him down in

front, but found that there were none left, so I put him on a little stool in the first entrance at the right of the stage—a sort of alcove near the switchboard; and he liked that even better than being down in the seats.

It struck me as I looked out over the crowd during the first act that I had never before seen so many woman and children in an audience. Even the gallery was full of mothers and children. There were several parties of girls in their teens. Teachers, college and high school students on their vacations were there in great numbers. The house seated a few more than 1,600. The managers declared afterwards that they sold only a few more than a hundred standing room tickets, which would bring the total attendance to considerably over 1,700. The testimony of others seemed to indicate that there were many more standees than admitted by the management, and it was widely believed that there were more than 2,000 people in the house that afternoon. And remember that back of the curtain, counting the members of the company, stage hands and so on, there were fully 400 more. The quantity of scenery, costumes and properties required for such a spectacle is prodigious, and a big force of men and women besides the actors is necessary to take care of it.

Much of the scenery used was of a very flimsy

character. Hanging suspended by a forest of ropes above the stage and so close together that they were well-nigh touching each other were no less than 280 drops, several of which were necessary to each set; all painted with oil colors, the great majority of them cut into delicate lacery and some of them of sheer gauze. There had been a fire in the scenery during our engagement in Cleveland, but by a piece of luck it was quickly squelched; and I had been playing in theatres for so long without any trouble with fire that the incident didn't give me much of a scare. It takes a disaster to make one cautious. After our experience at the Iroquois, not one in ten of us actors (and I dare say other people would have been equally heedless) could remember whether we had ever seen any fire extinguishers, fire hose, axes or other apparatus back of the stage.

The play went merrily through the first act. At the beginning of the second act a double octette—eight men and eight women—had a very pretty number called "In the Pale Moonlight." The stage was flooded with bluish light while they sang and danced. It was then that the trouble began. In spite of some slight conflict of opinion, there can be no doubt that one of the big lights high up at one side of the stage blew out its fuse. That was what had caused the Cleveland blaze, and it was well known

to the electricians of the company that in order to obtain the desired lighting effects, they were carrying much too heavy a load of power on the wires. Anyhow, a bit of the gauzy drapery caught fire at the right of the stage, some twelve or fifteen feet above the floor.

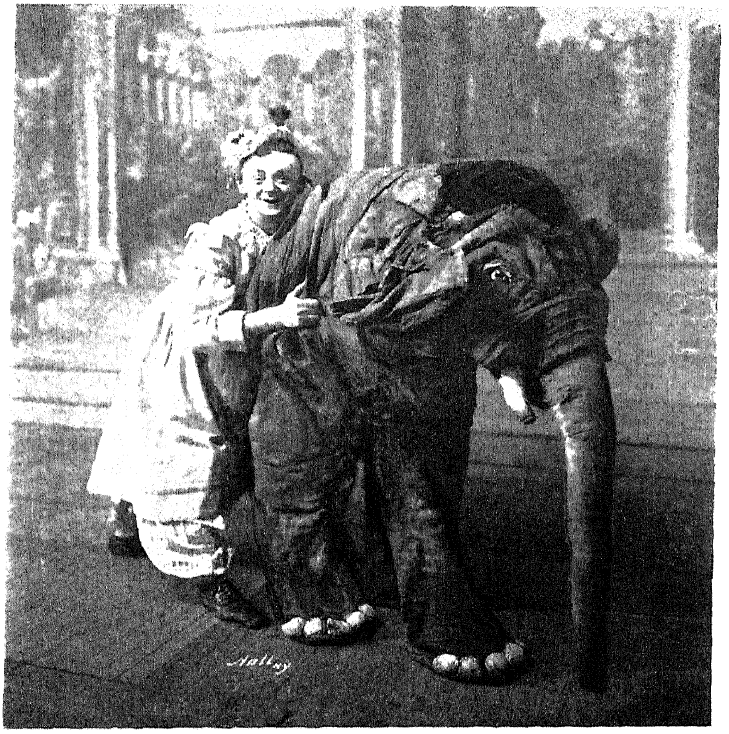
I was to come on in a few minutes for my turn with the comic elephant, and I was in my dressing room making up, as I wore a slightly different outfit in this scene. I heard a commotion outside and my first idle thought was, "I wonder if they're fighting down there again"—for there had been a row a few days before among the supers and stage hands. But the noise swelled in volume, and suddenly I became frightened. I jerked my door open, and instantly I knew that there was something deadly wrong. It could be nothing else but fire. My first thought was for Bryan, and I ran downstairs and around into the wings. Probably not forty seconds had elapsed since I heard the first commotion—but already the terror was beginning.

When the blaze was first discovered, two stage hands tried to extinguish it. One of them, it is said, strove to beat it out with a stick or a piece of canvas or something else, but it was too far above his head. Then he or the other man got one of those fire extinguishers consisting of a small tin tube of powder and tried to throw the stuff on the flame,

but it was ridiculously inadequate. If there were any of those large fire extinguishers there which throw liquid chemicals from a hose, nobody seemed to find them or to think of them. Meanwhile in the audience, those far around on the opposite side and especially those near the stage could see this blaze and the men fighting it, and they began to get frightened.

The flame spread through those tinder-like fabrics with terrible rapidity. If the drop first ignited could have been instantly separated from the others, the calamity might have been averted; but that was impossible. Within a minute the flame was beyond possibility of control by anything but a fire hose. Probably not even a big fire extinguisher could have stopped it by that time. Why no attempt was made to use any such apparatus, or whether, indeed, it was in working order, I don't know. If the house force had ever had any fire drills, there was no evidence of it in their actions. The stage manager was absent at the moment, and several of the stage hands were in a saloon across the street. No one had even taken the trouble to see that a fire alarm box was located on or near the theatre, and a stage hand ran all the way to South Water Street to turn in the alarm.

As I ran around back of the rear drop, I could hear the murmur of excitement growing in the



EDDIE FOY AS SISTER ANNE IN "MR. BLUEBEARD." HE WAS DRESSING FOR THIS ACT WITH THE ELEPHANT WHEN THE IROQUOIS FIRE BEGAN

audience. Somebody had of course yelled "Fire!" —there is almost always a fool of that species in an audience and sometimes several of them; and there are always hundreds of poorly balanced people who go crazy the moment they hear the word. I ran around into the wings, shouting for Bryan. The lower borders on that side were all aflame, and the blaze was leaping up into the flies. On the stage those brave boys and girls, bless them, were still singing and doing their steps, though the girls' voices were beginning to falter a little.

I found my boy in his place, though getting much frightened. I seized him and started towards the rear. But all those women and children out in front haunted me—the hundreds of little ones who would be helpless, trodden under foot in a panic. I must—I must do what I could to save them!

I tossed Bryan into the arms of a stage hand, crying "Take my boy out!" I paused a moment to watch him running towards the rear doors; then I turned and ran out on the stage, right through the ranks of the octette, still tremblingly doing their part, though the scenery was blazing over them; but as I reached the footlights, one of the girls fainted and one of the men picked her up and carried her off. I was a grotesque figure to come before an audience at so serious an occasion—tights

and comic shoes, a short smock—a sort of abbreviated Mother Hubbard—and a wig with a ridiculous little pigtail curving upward from the back of my head. The crowd was beginning to surge towards the doors and already showing signs of a stampede—those on the lower floor not so badly frightened as those in the more dangerous balcony and gallery. Up there they were falling into panic. Oh, God, if only I possessed an overmastering personality and eloquence that could quiet them! If only I could do fifty things at once!—Why didn't the asbestos curtain come down?—I began shouting at the top of my voice, "Don't get excited. There's no danger. Take it easy!"—and to Dillea, the orchestra leader, "Play! Start an overture—anything! But play!" Some of his musicians were fleeing, but a few, and especially a fat German violinist, stuck nobly—"Take your time, folks! (Wonder if that man got out with Bryan?) No danger!"—And sidewise into the wings, "The asbestos curtain! For God's sake, doesn't anybody know how to lower this curtain? Go slow, people! You'll get out!"

I stood perfectly still, and when addressing the audience spoke slowly, knowing that these signs of self-possession have a calming effect on a crowd. Those on the lower floor heard me and seemed to be reassured a little, but up above and especially

in the gallery, self possession had fled; they had gone mad.

Down came the curtain slowly, two-thirds of the way—and stopped, one end higher than the other, caught on the wire on which the girl made her flight over the audience, and which had just been raised into position for the coming feat. Then the strong draught coming through the back doors by which the company were fleeing, bellied the slack of it in a wide arc out into the auditorium, letting the draft and flame through at its sides. "Lower it! Cut the wire!" I yelled. "Don't be frightened, folks! Go slow! (Oh, God, maybe that man didn't take Bryan out!) No danger! Play, Dillea!" Below me, Dillea was still swinging his baton and that brave, fat little German was still fiddling alone and furiously, but no man could hear him now, for the roar of the flames was added to the roar of the mob. In the upper tiers they were in a mad, animal-like stampede—their screams, groans and snarls, the scuffle of thousands of feet and of bodies grinding against bodies merging into a crescendo half-wail, half roar, the most dreadful sound that ever assailed human ears.

"Laugh, Pagliacci!" wrote Amy Leslie of the scene. "What if they do burn? Play on, clown, sing, dance, jerk about your funny petticoats, though your own hair is growing gray under that comical

wig and deep wrinkles of fright and misery line your painted face. . . . No magnificently armored knight in flashing steel and waving plume could stand, a more heroic figure in the soul's eye of the grateful than this horror-stricken, courageous comedian who with every trick of gay pretense and active command, endeavored to calm that panic-crazed and fire-dipped mass of fighting bodies without minds."

Then came a cyclonic blast of fire from the stage out into the auditorium—probably a great mass of scenery suddenly ignited and fanned by a stronger gust—a flash and a roar as when a heap of loose powder is fired all at once. A huge billow of flame leaped out past me and over me and seemed to reach even to the balconies. Some of the audience described it as an "explosion" and "a great ball of fire." A shower of blazing fragments fell over me and set my wig smoldering. A fringe on the edge of the curtain just above my head was burning, and as I glanced up, the curtain itself was disintegrating. It was thin and not wire-reinforced; another cheat!

Now the last of the musicians had fled. I could do nothing more, and I might as well go, too. But by this time the inferno behind me was so terrible that I wondered whether I could escape that way;

perhaps it were better through the auditorium. But Bryan had gone out by the rear—if he had gone at all—and I was irresistibly drawn to follow, that I might learn his fate more quickly. I think I was the last man on the stage; I fairly had to grope my way through flame and smoke to reach the Dearborn Street stage door, which was still jammed with our people getting out. The actors and stage employees nearly all escaped—saved by the failure of the asbestos curtain to come down, which let the bulk of the flame roll out into the auditorium and brought death to many in the audience. The flying ballet went out as I did, rescued by the heroism of the elevator boy, who ran his car up through tips of flame into the flies where they stood awaiting their turn, and brought them down. But one of them, Nellie Reed, the premiere, was so badly burned that she died in a hospital a day or two later. Some of the people dressing under the stage had to break down doors or escape through coal chutes.

As I left the stage the last of the ropes holding up the drops burned through, and with them the whole loft collapsed with a terrifying crash, bringing down tons of burning material—and with that, all the lights in the house went out and another great balloon of flame leaped out into the audito-

rium, licking even the ceiling and killing scores who had not yet succeeded in escaping from the gallery.

The horror in the auditorium was beyond all description. There were thirty exits, but few of them were marked by lights, some even had heavy portieres over the doors, and some of the doors were locked or fastened with levers which no one knew how to work. There was no great panic on the parquet floor save at the outskirts, and I am humbly thankful in the belief that my pleading quieted those within the sound of my voice and prevented those nearest the stage (although in greater danger) from throwing their weight against those massed near the doors. There was a bit of a stampede at the rear of the ground floor—among those less in danger than any others in the house—and some were trampled under foot, but most of them were rescued by the determined efforts of the doorkeepers and policemen at the entrances.

It was said that some of the exit doors leading from the upper tiers on to the fire escapes on the alley between Randolph and Lake Streets seemed to be either rusted or frozen (for the weather was bitterly cold) and were very hard to open. They were finally burst open, but meanwhile precious moments had been lost which meant the death of many behind those doors. The fire escape ladders

could not accommodate the crowd, and many fell or jumped to death on the pavement below. Some of those following were not killed because they alighted on the cushion of bodies of those who had gone before. When one balcony exit was opened, those who surged out on the platform found that they could not descend the steps because flames were leaping from the exit below them. Some painters in a building across a narrow court threw a ladder over to the platform; a man started crawling over it—one end of it slipped off the icy landing and he fell, crushed, on the stones below. The painters then succeeded in bridging the gap with plank, and just twelve people crossed that narrow footpath to safety. The twelfth was pursued by a tongue of flame which dashed against the wall of the opposite building—and no more escaped. The iron platform was crowded with women and children. Some died right there; others crawled over the railing and fell to the pavement. The iron railings were actually torn off some of the platforms.

But it was inside the house that the greatest loss of life occurred, especially on the stairways leading down from the second balcony. Here most of the dead were trampled or smothered, though many jumped or fell over the balustrade to the floor of the foyer. In places on the stairways, par-

ticularly where a turn caused a jam, the bodies were piled seven or eight feet deep. Firemen and police confronted a sickening task in disentangling them. An occasional living person was found in the heaps, but most of these were terribly injured. The heel prints on the dead faces mutely testified to the cruel fact that human animals stricken by terror are as mad and ruthless as stampeding cattle. Many bodies had the clothes torn from them, and some had the flesh trodden from their bones.

Never elsewhere did a great fire disaster occur so quickly. It is said that from the start of the fire until all the audience were either escaped or killed or lying maimed in the halls and alleys the time was just eight minutes. In that eight minutes more than five hundred lives went out. The fire department arrived quickly after the alarm and extinguished the fire in the auditorium so promptly that no more than the plush upholstery was burned off the seats, the wooden parts remaining intact. But when a fire chief thrust his head through a side exit and shouted, "Is anybody alive in here?" not a sound was heard in reply. The few who were not dead were insensible or dying. Within ten minutes from the beginning of the fire, bodies were being laid in rows on the sidewalks, and all the ambulances and dead-wagons in the city could not keep



EDDIE FOY AS THE SANDMAN IN "PIFF, PAFF, POUF"

up with the ghastly harvest. Within twenty-four hours Chicago knew that at least 587 were dead, and that many more injured. Subsequent deaths among the injured brought the list up to 602.

As I rushed out of the theatre, I could think of nothing but my boy. I became more and more frightened; as I neared the street I was certain he hadn't gotten out. But when I reached the sidewalk, God be praised, there he was with his faithful friend just outside the door. I seized him in my arms and turned toward the hotel.

It was a thinly clad mob which poured out of the stage doors into the snow. The temperature was around zero, and an icy gale was howling through the streets. Many of the actors and actresses had had no opportunity to save street clothes or wraps, and some of the chorus girls who were dressing at the time of the fire were compelled to run out almost nude. Kindly people furnished wraps for these whenever they could and took them into business houses near by for refuge.

My own outfit of tights and thin smock felt like nothing at all, and my teeth were chattering so from the cold and the horror of what I had just been through that I could not speak. A well-dressed man, a stranger to me, stopped me and said, "My friend, you'd better borrow my overcoat,"

throwing off his heavy coat as he did so and helping me to put it on. He then picked up Bryan and walked with me across the street—and there, at the corner of a drug store, hurrying towards the theatre, I saw my wife with the two youngest children.

She gave a scream at sight of me, and crying, "Oh, thank God! Thank God!" she threw herself into my arms—then seized Bryan and kissed him, then me again, transferring quantities of grease paint from my face to her own and then to her son's. She had had a vague premonition of disaster from the time that Bryan and I had left the hotel that afternoon. Her ears unconsciously alert for significant sounds, she had heard the first clang of a fire truck gong in the street—rushed to the window, saw the direction the firemen were taking, and felt certain that the trouble was at the theatre. Quickly she put wraps on the children and started towards the Iroquois on foot.

We turned back towards the hotel, thankful yet horrified, for I knew that the calamity must have been a terrible one. I returned the overcoat to my good Samaritan friend, but was so agitated that I forgot to ask his name or even to thank him adequately, I fear. If he still lives and chances to read this, I hope he will understand and accept this belated expression of my gratitude.

I had no sleep at all that night. Newspaper reporters were begging me for interviews, friends were calling me by telephone and wiring me, and I had to reassure my mother and sisters and my wife's two sisters, who were taking care of our Eastern home. I was too excited to sleep, anyhow, even if I had had opportunity. My nerves did not subside to normal pitch for weeks afterward.

I was greatly touched by the many kindly things spoken by the press regarding my behavior in the disaster. What I did was little enough, Heaven knows, and at the critical moment I was enraged almost to the point of madness because of my inability to do more. I have already quoted—I hope without undue egotism—a bit from a much longer article of praise written by Amy Leslie. Another paragraph which pleased me very much was written by Hartley Davis:

"Somehow we think of Eddie Foy's effort to check that mad panic as parallelling the tremendous effort of Gwynplaine, 'the Man who Laughs,' when taking his rightful place as Lord Clancharlie in the House of Lords, he sought to subdue the fatal grin on his face and to command the respect of that august body. It may be farfetched, but with the picture of that droll comedian, who never before had come before people without the thought of making them laugh upper-

most in his mind, standing on that flame-swept stage, pleading, commanding, longing for the tragic power of a Kean to control that frenzied throng, my mind inevitably dwells on that wondrous scene of Victor Hugo's."

XXI

THE Iroquois disaster brought about a serious reaction upon the theatrical profession in general. On the day after the fire every theatre in Chicago was closed, and they remained so for some time, while the city authorities were investigating the question of their safety. Numerous road shows were thus thrown out of weeks of business in Chicago, and to make it worse, New York and other cities also began closing theatres suspected of being unsafe. Theatre managers the country over of course began rushing into print with declarations that a disaster like that of the Iroquois could not possibly happen in *their* house; but city governments generally refused to accept such statements until they had been put to the test.

A New York newspaper a few days later listed over fifty companies which had actually closed their season's run; and it was said that counting vaudeville and burlesque players there were 15,000 people idle. In Chicago alone during the first two weeks in January 6,000 who depended upon the mimic world for their living—actors, actresses,

chorus singers, stage hands, mechanics, etc.—were out of work.

But the terrible lesson was sadly needed. In New York at that very moment there were Broadway theatres which had wooden stairways; there were aisles so narrow that not more than one person could pass through them at a time; the matter of exits had been given little study or even attention; there was a theatre located upstairs in that city with only one not too wide stairway, and a winding one at that, down which the entire audience must go to reach the ground; there were basement dressing rooms reached by stairways little better than ladders, where actors would be caught like rats in a trap in case of a sudden fire. The fine for violation of the fire laws in New York was nominal. The retiring fire commissioner of that city had recently asserted that there were theatres on Broadway which were far worse traps than the Iroquois. During the discussion which prevailed, Oscar Hammerstein declared that no children would ever be admitted to a theatre controlled by him; and he angered some of the ladies by adding that a woman with a child constituted one of the most dangerous elements that could be found inside a theatre.

The Chicago horror was a blessing in one respect—namely, in that it brought about a country-

wide investigation and house-cleaning. Theatres in some cities were declared hopeless fire-traps and were permanently closed. Others were compelled to make costly repairs. The top gallery of a theatre in Philadelphia was eliminated. Stringent ordinances regarding exits were passed and enforced. A Boston theatre manager, anxious to prove the safety of his house, threw it open during the day and invited the public to call and inspect the aisles and exit arrangements and to test the asbestos curtain with a plumber's blow-torch. Since then theatres have been far safer than ever before. There are occasional hazards and violations of the laws of safety still, but I hope and believe that another disaster such as that of the Iroquois is at least improbable.

The *Mr. Bluebeard* production was totally ruined, and Klaw & Erlanger soon decided that they would not attempt to reproduce it; so about three hundred people were for the time being thrown out of jobs. I went back East with my family and for a few weeks did an act in vaudeville—an adaptation of my scene between Sister Anne and the elephant. I had the same two young men who had played the fore and hind legs of the animal in the Bluebeard company, but I had to get a new elephant, as the old one had been cremated in the fire.

My vaudeville work came to an end late in March, when I began rehearsals for the new musical comedy, "Piff! Paff! Pouf!" which opened at the Casino in New York on April 2d. In this Templar Saxe, John Hyams and I played Messrs. Piffle, Paffle, and Pouffle respectively—Joseph Miron, Alice Fischer, Amelia Stone, Abby Stange and others also having important parts. My friend Billy Jerome wrote the lyrics. I had at least one rather memorable song, "The Ghost that Never Walked," and a novel scene in which I was buried in sand on a beach, then dug up and exhibited by a fakir as a piece of sculpture made from sand. I came to life when a millionairess fell in love with me, but when my wife inopportunely appeared, I was suddenly petrified to sand again.

"Piff! Paff! Pouf!" was a big success. In the following year I was cast in a new piece, *The Earl and the Girl,* playing the part of Jim Cheese, a dog trainer, who for a time masquerades as an earl in coronet and ermine-trimmed robe. J. Bernard Dyllyn, Templar Saxe, Victor Morley, W. H. Armstrong, Zelma Rawlston, Amelia Summerville, Georgia Caine and others made up a strong cast. That fall I appeared with this troupe at Chicago for the first time since the Iroquois fire, and my reception when I first came on the stage from one of those typical Chicago audiences which

never forgot a friend was so generous that it brought tears to my eyes. They fairly stopped the show, and I was compelled to speak a sentence or two of thanks before we could proceed. At the close of the act more remarks were so insistently demanded that although an impromptu speech is a matter of terror to me, I faltered a few more words of gratitude.

The Broadway thespian of today who, when he "goes on the road," sees none but a few of the larger cities, wots little of the varied color in the life of an actor of twenty and more years ago, when much smaller towns had not been taken over by the movies, but were still ports of call for metropolitan troupes. We got closer to people's hearts in those small towns than in the great metropoli. They saw us with the paint off and in our own character—eagerly watched us arriving and departing at the railway station, loafing in the hotel or strolling on the street at odd moments. And we, for our part, learned more of the secrets of small-town life than the New Yorker of today e'er dreams of.

All this, inconsistently enough, comes to my mind as I glance at a clipping in my scrap book, taken from a newspaper in Johnstown, New York, early in 1906. As I read it I can almost hear again those Wednesday evening church bells—the "first" and "second bells" at 7.15 and 7.30. It will be noted

that amenities between church and stage were not unknown in provincial small towns even twenty years ago:

"All reports to the contrary notwithstanding, Eddie Foy will positively appear in *The Earl and the Girl* at the Grand this evening. The advance sale of seats is already so large that Manager Colin announces that seats that have been engaged will not be held after 7.30 o'clock unless payment is guaranteed. In order to accommodate those who may wish to attend prayer meeting, the curtain will be held until 8.30."

The Orchid, which opened at Philadelphia in March, 1907, was an English comedy and one of the Shuberts' great successes. The so-called plot, which centered in and around a horticultural college was concerned with the efforts of a wealthy American to get possession of an orchid which would win for him the prize at the flower show at Nice. My job was "to disfigure or to represent" the part of Artie Choke, head gardener at the horticultural college. Trixie Friganza was at first the female lead, later very ably succeeded by Flavia Arcaro.

Some auditors found difficulty in believing that it was I who sang "Mulberry Street" in this show in Italian make-up and dialect—it was so different from my ordinary run of characters. A typical

comment, written by a St. Louis critic, said, "He was a revelation as a character actor, depicting an Italian in a lifelike manner and rendering the broken dialect splendidly. 'I didn't believe he had it in him,' was the remark made by many who have seen Foy only in his conventional roles. But take care, Eddie. This doesn't mean that you can play Hamlet."

This final shot hints at rumors which had already been going the rounds for more than a year—a carefully nurtured campaign of propaganda kept going by the Shuberts. We were evolving an idea which had long been in my mind—namely, that of playing some sort of burlesque on *Hamlet.* It was decided that the best way to build up an approach to this was to intimate that I had finally made up my mind to put an end to clowning, and fulfil a life's ambition by playing Hamlet in the best tradition of Edwin Booth.

Rumors were persistently circulated that I intended discarding the name of Foy, which was so unpleasantly associated with buffoonery, and assume my rightful paternal cognomen, being known thenceforth as Mr. Edwin Fitzgerald, the tragedian. In interviews I gravely but cautiously admitted that some plans of the sort were being discussed, but that I was not yet at liberty to make a full statement on the matter.

"I have long known that I have the artistic temperament for those roles," I would say. "I am really a Shakespearean actor, but the managers have kidded me out of it. I shall start with Hamlet, and after that play Touchstone, Lear and other roles. Of course no artist can be sure of success in Shakespearean drama, but if, as I expect, I do succeed, none will ever hear of me in comedy or as Eddie Foy again."

The fact that I knew Hamlet's lines forward and backward, and had so often been heard off the stage reciting not only that but other Shakespearean parts by the yard, lent color to the stories. "One must make some concession to one's gnawing temperament," I would say. "I've been sitting on this lid of mine for twenty-five years"—which had more of truth than jest in it. But of course I had no thought whatsoever of playing Hamlet seriously. I still yearned to do it, but I had long since become aware that it could never be.

Of course there was a tempest of jeering and kidding at the announcement. Burlesque casts were suggested—Fay Templeton as Ophelia, Lee Harrison as Horatio, Jeff de Angelis as Laertes, George Cohan as Polonius, Pete Daily as the King, and so on. Later May Irwin was touted as Ophelia, and May gave an interview in which she admitted that owing to a slight increase in her weight, she had



EDDIE FOY IN "THE EARL AND THE GIRL"

regretfully given up her long-cherished ambition to play Juliet, but that she still considered herself physically and temperamentally fitted to handle Ophelia as opposite to my Hamlet.

Some one even dug up the story of the Shakespearean performance in which I had participated in Chicago some fifteen years before, when I was still with the Henderson company. The true version of that episode is this:

At a stock theatre over on the West Side of Chicago there was employed at that time an actor named William Morris. He was the leading man of the company, and he thought himself far too good for the ordinary mill run of melodramas which prevailed at that house. Given a fair opportunity in something better, he thought he could convince the leading producers of America that a great star had been twinkling unseen under their very noses, dimmed by the murk of provincial obscurity.

Finally his opportunity came—or rather, he made it. A benefit was suggested for somebody or other, and Morris leaped into the breach with a request that he be permitted to raise a company and put on *Julius Caesar* with himself as Marc Antony. The proposition was agreed to, and Morris called upon all the available actors in the city and asked them to help him out. It happened that

most of the prominent ones who were able or willing to assist him were comedians. The result was that when Morris finally made out his cast, Arthur Dunn, who was about as big as a pint of peanuts, was to play Caesar, Jacques Kruger was Brutus and I was Cassius. John D. Gilbert was also in the cast, playing Casca, I think. We all solemnly promised to do our very best and indulge in no funny business.

For three solid weeks we rehearsed. Morris was working his head off and fairly growing thin with the worry of it. Finally the day came. It was to be a matinée, of course, for we were all working elsewhere at night. McVicker's was the theatre, and by dint of much plugging from everybody, the house was full when the curtain rose. Every critic in town was there, and perhaps Morris wasn't the only one who thought it possible that he might show that he had better material in him than he was being permitted to use.

The performance moved along very nicely until we reached the forum scene. Morris, tense and perspiring, was hovering in the wings, impatiently awaiting the moment when he should bring down the house with his funeral oration, and inscribe his name for all time on the roll of great tragedians.

The moment of the assassination came. Casca cried, "Speak, hands, for me!" and we all closed

in on Caesar and stabbed him. As the dumpy little person of Arthur Dunn sank to the floor, somebody either by accident or design kicked him and caused him to do such a funny fall that I involuntarily snickered half aloud. I had my back partly turned to the audience and the giggle might have gone unnoticed even then had not the defunct Caesar heard it, opened one eye and raised his head slightly to see what the joke was about. At that I shook with merriment and Kruger sputtered aloud —whereupon another and another of the cast exploded; then the audience caught the infection and the laughter swelled into a roar. For three or four minutes stage and auditorium were swept by a cataclysm of mirth such as probably no theatre ever saw before. The stage manager rang down the curtain; there was nothing else to do. The scene was ruined.

Poor Morris was almost mad with rage and grief: "My God!" he shrieked. "Here I've been toiling for weeks on this thing, and now you damned clowns, you jackasses, wreck it in two minutes." He strode to and fro, raving and tearing his hair in an ecstasy which would have made him the greatest actor of the century if he could have reproduced it to order. I really felt a sincere remorse and pity for him; but it was too late then. His chance was gone. I've no doubt he always

attributed his failure to reach the top of the profession to the collapse of that unfortunate matineé.

All the rumors regarding my ambition were finally exploded when *Mr. Hamlet of Broadway* opened in the fall of 1908. The burlesque of *Hamlet* was only a portion of the show. In order to give it a setting and an excuse, the scene of the play was laid in a summer hotel, "Starvation Inn, Lake Putrid," in the Adirondacks. I represented Joey Wheeze, a stranded circus clown. When a famous tragedian who was expected to give a performance at the hotel was unable to appear, the thrifty landlord engaged Joey to fill his place.

In the burlesque I had scenes with Ophelia (played by Maude Raymond), with the gravediggers and with the King and Queen. I dressed and made up the part with scrupulous care as to tradition. I used all the grace of voice and gesture that I could command, but the words I spoke were ridiculous parodies of the original lines. At the very last moment I longed—oh, how wistfully!—to play just one scene in the original words, as I had longed to do it thirty years before. I scarcely needed the director's reminder, however, of what I already knew—that such would be out of key with the farcical nature of the rest of the performance.

The fact that upon occasion I could be something



Eddie Foy as Hamlet in "Mr. Hamlet of Broadway"

else than a Punchinello was a decided revelation to many. A Philadelphia critic remarked, "For once we see the comedian becomingly garbed, and it was to be noted that he has an admirable stage presence, that his reading is good when he wanted it to be so, and that he has a grace of movement and an authority which are quite compelling." The Washington Star declared that "It may be a shock to the matinée girl who has been worshipping pictures of E. H. Sothern and Forbes-Robertson, but the handsomest Hamlet on the stage today is Eddie Foy." Ah, well! I was only fifty-two then, though many observers avowed that I succeeded in making Hamlet look like twenty-two.

The Pittsburg Post man wrote that "Several years ago Eddie Foy made the statement that his comedy face was largely deliberate effort on his part—a combination of grease paint and muscular contraction. People who had known Eddie for years were inclined to laugh, for they had always seen him with the same sandy wig, the crescent-shaped mouth, the dab of carmine on the nose and the lines above the eyes. No matter what he was playing, Eddie Foy was always Eddie Foy, with the same rolling gait, the comical guttural voice and all else that have made him such a success in clowning.

"But when he comes out in the traditional cos-

tume of Hamlet, the black garb, the black wig, the chain and ribbons, one gasps with astonishment, for the picture is really a handsome one. When he speaks the first lines with the true legitimate intonations and in a voice that has considerable warmth and sympathy, one gasps again, for the old Eddie Foy has given place to a real actor."

I'm quoting all this to show up those birds in the Lambs Club who (in heavy sarcasm, of course) promoted the presentation of a medal to me some years ago as the handsomest member. Seriously, the pulchritudinous Hamlet face was about as much a matter of make-up as the clownish mug usually affected by me. My real face was somewhere in between the two. And perhaps there's yet another reason for those quotations. In spite of all that I've said in laudation of the comedian's profession, I still like to prove, as do all buffoons, that I can do something other than prance in cap and bells. with grotesque face and nonsense on my lips.

The Hamlet travesty occupied me for the better part of two seasons. In 1910 I was cast in a piece called *Up and Down Broadway,* which title seems a bit incongruous when one learns that some of the scenes were laid on Olympus and were thronged with the well-known divinities who formerly inhabited that eminence. Of these Emma Carus as Melpomene and I as Momus carried the front end

of the fun-making, while the other Muses, Graces and the like, intermingled with about an equal number of mortals, made up an interesting circle.

From 1911 to 1913 I carried the lead in a comedy with music, entitled *Over the River,* which was noteworthy because of the fact that John Golden, now a millionaire New York producer but then still a moderately successful composer (and that was only fifteen years ago), wrote the music. In this play I acknowledged my increasing years by assuming a middle-aged man's part for the first time—that of Madison Parke, an old rounder who, becoming too vociferous on the Great White Way, was sentenced to Blackwell's Island for thirty days, and tried to make his wife believe he had gone to Mexico. Maude Lambert, Melville Stewart and several other clever people were in the cast, and we toured the whole country with it.

That was my last play. Thenceforward I was in vaudeville. But in order to discuss the vaudeville experience, I shall have to turn back and tell something of the Foyettes.

XXII

I HAVE much greater satisfaction in my record as a family man than in my achievements as a comedian. I have a genuine pride in the two facts that I am the father of eight fine children, and that, although an actor, I have never been divorced—that is, not yet. Still, come to think of it, I'm only seventy-one!

My wife, Madeline Morando, whom I married in 1896, had won her laurels as a danseuse; but in later years she proved herself to be even greater as a mother than she had ever been as a representative of Terpsichore. She not only became the mother of seven bright and handsome boys and girls and brought them all up to a gracious maturity, but she also contrived to make most of them look more Italian than Irish.

When we moved our place of abode from Chicago to New York there were two sons, Bryan and Charles; and thereafter the birthdays came rapidly. We located first in an uptown apartment, and there Richard, the third boy, was born, followed by Mary, my second daughter. I was compelled to call upon so many of my friends to serve

as godfathers and godmothers that if we hadn't kept a careful roster of them, I shouldn't at this day be able to tell who half of them were.

Soon after Mary came to join our family in 1901, we went down to our church at Seventh Avenue and 142d Street for the christening ceremony. According to one of the newspapers, this is the colloquy that followed:

"What is to be the name of this child?" asked Father Higgins.

"Mary," replied Mr. Foy.

"Who are the godfather and godmother?"

"My friend, Mr. William Jerome, and my niece, Miss Montmorency," said Mr. Foy, nervously.

"What is your real name, Mr. Foy?" demanded Father Higgins.

"My real—my real—did you say my real name?" inquired Mr. Foy with blanched face.

"I did."

"Well—I hope you will keep this to yourself, Father—it is Fitzgerald," said the comedian.

"Indeed! And what is Mr. Jerome's name?"

"My name is William Flannery," said Mr. Jerome desperately. "I didn't think this of you, Father."

"And Miss Montmorency; what is her actual family name?"

"Well, if you must know, it is Doyle," said Miss Montmorency with a deep, dark blush.

"Thank you," said the priest. "Now we will proceed to business."

My wife and I now decided that a city apartment was no place for children, so we rented a semi-country house at Harrison in Westchester County, between New Rochelle and Rye. In 1904, having prospered comfortably in my profession, I bought a home on the Boston Post Road in the eastern edge of New Rochelle, almost in Larchmont. This we named "The Foyer," and there the children may be said to have been reared—what time they were not on the road with me. Three more came to join the flock—Eddie, Junior, the only real blonde in the family, Madeline, and Irving.

New Rochelle had already a strong dramatic atmosphere when we located there, Francis Wilson, Augustus Thomas and others more or less directly connected with the stage having homes there in a borough. But don't imagine that we were all just around the corner from each other; New Rochelle is a larger city than some are aware of. My home was so far on the outskirts, nearly two miles from the business center, that it was a real country place when I bought it—several acres of

it, with forest trees right in the yard, and far in the rear a gently sloping hillside with a few big boulders jutting from it; an ideal playground for the youngsters. And alongside us were some level vacant lots which were obviously created for baseball. Neighbors were rather few and scattering at that time, and there was therefore not so much danger of breaking windows when one threw stones, as one must necessarily do in early youth.

We had all the rural comforts and conveniences; a cow which—all funny wheezes to the contrary notwithstanding I actually learned to milk—a horse (until automobiles drove him out of business), chickens, ducks, pigeons, fruit trees, flowers, cats, dogs and even at one time a goat. The goat, however, is not, I believe, considered a rustic animal.

Here we had not only our own children but at various times two or three others whom we practically adopted because they were temporarily or permanently deprived of their parents. Newspaper writers represented passengers on the Stamford interurban car as inquiring of the conductor, "Is that an orphan asylum?"

"Naw," would be the reply. "That's where Eddie Foy lives."

It got so that if anyone in Westchester County found a lost child, he immediately called up "The



EDDIE FOY AND HIS FAMILY AT THEIR NEW ROCHELLE HOME

Foyer" to see if it was one of mine. I used to wake up in the morning and worry for fear it was somebody's birthday and I had forgotten it.

"How do you think up names for all the kids, Eddie?" said Willie Collier to me one day. When the birth of one of my sons was announced at the Shubert offices, Lee Shubert said to me half joking, half seriously, "Why don't you name him after me, Eddie?"

"I'd like to do it, Lee," said I. "Indeed, it would give me great pleasure if it were practicable. But consider a moment and you'll see why it won't do. Lee Foy! Why, everybody who heard it would think he was a Chinaman!"

One day in the summer of 1904, I think it was, a hotel proprietor, a friend of mine from Elberon, New Jersey, while talking with me in a Broadway café, invited me to come down and spend the week end at his comfortable hostelry.

"I'd enjoy it enormously, old man," said I, "but Sunday is when I really get acquainted with my family. Up late every night, you know—sleep late next forenoon—then maybe a matinee. Sunday is our general rally day at home."

"Oh, pshaw, bring the family along," said he. "You can get acquainted with them down at my hotel just as well as you can at home. Big verandas—fine sand beach for the kids to play in; they'll

have a whale of a time. Come down on the early train Sunday morning and stay till Monday. No excuses accepted."

He didn't ask me how large my family was and it didn't occur to me to tell him. After some demurring, I accepted his invitation. On Sunday morning when we debouched from the train at Elberon, we found a carriage waiting to take us up to my friend's hotel. I went to a telephone and called him up.

"You'll have to send two more carriages, Bill," I told him.

"Two more carr—what for?" he stuttered.

"Well, you told me to bring my family along," I reminded him, apologetically. "I have five children—and then there's my wife and my wife's sister and my own sister and a nurse; they're all members of my family, you know; not to speak of a few hand bags and so on."

I could hear him gasp, faintly, "Good God!" But he was game. Two more carriages came scurrying down to the station in a few minutes. If he hadn't owned a hotel and had plenty of room to spare, I wouldn't have played such a trick on him. He was able to laugh at the joke before the day was over, but he didn't invite me again to come and bring all the family.

Seriously, there is in all the world no anchor so

efficacious for a vagrant spirit as a house full of children.I have not the slightest thought of setting myself up as a model of conduct, for I'm far from that; but I wish merely to suggest that if more actors and actresses could be induced to try the bucolic domestic life as I did, with plenty of children on the side, there'd be fewer divorces and far less unrest and unhappiness in the profession.

Before I married Madeline I was a very fluent and graceful spender. My wife changed all that, and in spite of the size of my family I saved money and began to accumulate real estate. That house full of folks, all mine, had a mighty comforting and steadying effect on me, too, when I was away from home; and when not on the road, I spent every spare moment there. I was as proud of that little string of nicely graduated heads as the mother of the Gracchi was of her jewels.

As the kids grew old enough to play baseball, we gradually developed a family team all our own. I was so deeply absorbed in a game with them one day that I failed to notice the flight of time, although I was expected to go down to the city to catch a train for Providence, where I was to appear that night. Suddenly I remembered! I looked at my watch—it was too late to catch the train at the Grand Central Station or even at 125th Street. I drove at top speed to the station in New Rochelle

and begged the agent to wire somebody for permission to flag the train there. He declared such a thing impossible. I induced him to wire the superintendent, then the general manager, and tried to bribe him to call the president of the road. He seemed to make no progress whatsoever. First one official and then another insisted that to stop such a fast train at our village was out of the question. With perspiration beading my countenance, I kept my eyes on my watch. Presently I knew that the train had left New York; now it was well on its way. I besought the agent to wire again and give the manager all the facts—how that my failing to reach Providence that evening would probably mean the loss of my job and the throwing of a family of eleven or twelve on to the county, and that the cost of stopping the train would not cut any figure with me. I must get aboard even if I had to flag it myself. Finally, when the train was almost in sight, came the welcome word, "Stop it!"

Some of my happiest hours on the road with various shows were those when my wife and children travelled with me—as they did several times. Our greatest exploit of this sort was in the winter of 1912-13, my last season with *Over the River,* when the whole blooming outfit accompanied me for several months, Irving, the youngest, being then less than four years old. I must admit that this

stunt was not entirely innocent of publicity designs, for we had decided to take the bunch into vaudeville in the following season.

We had of course spent many hours in thoughtful, not to say anxious, observation of the youngsters to ascertain if possible the particular bent of each; and not always with definite results. Bryan, for example, in his teens showed a great fondness for tinkering with automobile engines. We thereupon decided that he was going to be—no, no, not a mere dealer or repair shop owner, but a great automobile manufacturer. Instead of that, he is now firmly installed in the motion picture business. But with their parentage and environment as they were, it was natural that there should be in our children a decided tendency toward the stage. Two or three of the boys were at a very early age giving private imitations of me; and one evening when the whole gang were engaged in a nightgown frolic, my wife and I looked them over and decided that they were good enough for vaudeville.

I had done a few brief single turns in vaudeville in recent summers when my regular shows were vacationing, as they often used to do during the heated term, and so, although it had been thirty years since the old concert-hall days, vaudeville was not a novelty to me. I tried the youngsters out in August, 1912, and they seemed to have a very

palpable knack of putting their stuff across. We began regularly in 1913. Our first sketch was called, for lack of a better title, *Fun in the Foy Family*. Later we used *The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe* and *Slumwhere in New York*, which took well the country over.

The quick wit of a successful writer of such sketches is well illustrated by a stunt of Will Jerome's. Jerome, by the way, wrote several of our sketches and songs. I had taken the kids over to Bayside, Long Island, one evening to participate, along with a number of other professionals, in a benefit for a struggling little church. We were going to do a sort of impromptu act in street dress. As I was standing in the wings just before going on, I said to Jerome, who was beside me, "Give me a funny line to open with."

He pondered a moment. "Let's see," he murmured. "You're in front, the kids behind you as the curtain rises. The audience gives you an opening hand. You cast a glance back at the youngsters and say with a little smile, 'If I ever move to Bayside, it'll be a big city!'"

I did it, and the crowd howled with delight. Thereafter for a season or two I used that joke the country over, in cities big and little, from Boston to Seattle and Los Angeles; and in every town, one or more of the newspapers quoted the line next

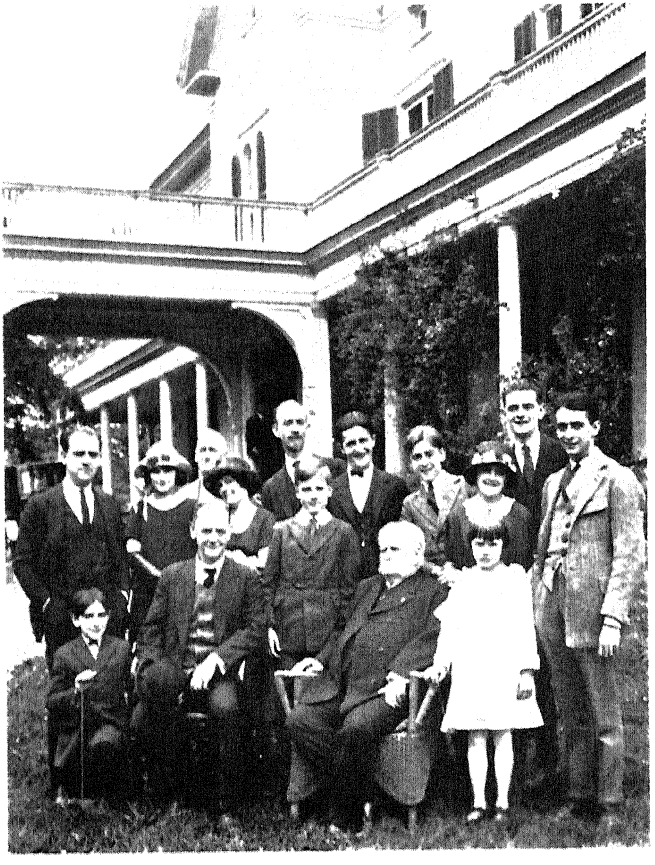
morning as one of the outstanding bits of cleverness of the act.

I was in vaudeville with the kids about ten years. They were all children when we began, but when I finally dropped out of the act, they were all—with the exception of Irving—grown men and women! We used to have some rough sledding in the earlier years of the act because of the child labor laws in various States. Some reformers professed to see something very cruel in the picture of those little "tots"—that was the word generally used in speaking of them, though some of them were fourteen and sixteen years old—toiling and being exploited in so godless a place as a theatre.

The Gerry people in New York gave us trouble, and in Cincinnati, Chicago and some other places I was actually indicted and arrested. We had scarcely begun our work when in New York in September, 1913, I was summoned to court on complaint of the Children's Society. But the organization made a mistake in selecting as the basis of their complaint the charge that I caused my son Richard to sing on the stage of a certain theatre on a certain date a ballad called "And the Green Grass Grew All Around." This left nothing for me to do but retort that Richard couldn't sing a note and to prove not only by witnesses but by a demonstration on the stand that the boy merely talked

the words of the song to music. Whereupon the charge was dismissed. Blessings be on the man who invented technicalities!

Whenever I was summoned I showed that the children's mother travelled with them all the time, as did a nurse and governess, and that they had their lessons every forenoon just as if they had been at home. Not only this, but we often spent fully half the year in our own home. I argued that it was ridiculous to call their few minutes on the stage in the afternoon and evening "work," for they loved it and regarded it as no hardship. Furthermore, they delighted in the travelling and seeing new cities, and I considered this an important part of their education. I pointed out that the children—most of them, at least—would probably make the stage their life profession, and they were merely receiving instruction, just as children were taught in technical schools. They had a playday every week, just as I did, and we made no stipulations as to how they spent their money, though they often bought junk which was extremely difficult to carry with us on our travels. My wife, who was courier-in-chief to the crowd, was sometimes driven almost distracted by the job of taking care of the musical instruments, giant dolls, mechanical toys, bearskins and other impedimenta, not to speak of live pets, which in addition to our regular



EDDIE FOY, THE YOUNGER FOYS AND SOME OTHERS WITH HENRY WATTERSON ON MR. WATTERSON'S LAWN IN LOUISVILLE

baggage and properties, must either be taken with us or shipped back to New Rochelle.

We had some interesting scenes at our various trials, and I found the courts generally inclined to agree with my arguments. In Cincinnati (and other places) for example, Miss Curran, the children's governess, produced her high school teacher's certificate, and the kids recited some of their lessons to prove that they were receiving a good education. Judge Yeatman remarked that he had seen the act and enjoyed it very much, and that it seemed foolish to deplore the condition of these children, who were under the constant care of their father and mother. "I respect the law," said he, "and I respect the Juvenile Protective Association, but in my opinion this is a wrongful arrest, and such things as this and other reform gestures merely retard progress." He then dismissed the case, descended from the bench and taking my wife by the hand, congratulated her on being the mother of so large and so fine a family.

There was considerable annoyance and worry in connection with these affairs, and there was always the possibility that one of them might turn out badly for us, but I must admit that they had their brighter sides in that they gave us a lot of free publicity. In Louisville, however, in supposedly hospitable old Kentucky, we ran up against some

particularly pestiferous opposition on the part of certain naggers who were determined to drive us out of business; and that in the city which nurtured Mary Anderson and where she made her debut as Juliet at the age of sixteen. I dare say Mary or her folks—or both—would have gotten into jail if they had come back and tried it thirty-five years later.

I was arrested there no less than three times in rapid succession, and would have been arrested again, but my attorney advised me to give up the fight, cut short my week's engagement and get out of the State. So that night after the show we all quietly slipped across the river to New Albany, in Indiana, and escaped another pinch next day. My good friend, Colonel Henry Watterson, editor of the Courier-Journal, in whose home I spent many happy hours, was then still alive, and he wrote some very trenchant editorials and articles upholding my side of the case. Largely through his agency this question was so thoroughly aired that the Legislature soon thereafter saw fit to amend the law so as to permit stage appearances such as that of my children; and the Governor, who had been an ardent patron of mine, sent me the pen with which he had signed the new act.

This reminds me that I have had pleasant contacts with a great many prominent people of my time. For example, I'll wager that I'm one of a

comparatively few persons living whose car has been cranked by Henry Ford.

It happened some thirteen or fourteen years ago, before Henry was quite as colossally wealthy or even as world-famous as he is now. I was becoming pretty well known as a user of his cars. From motives of economy, the first car I ever bought was a Ford, and I stuck to the brand for several years.

The Ford store in New York was then at Fifty-fourth Street and Broadway. During the show one evening I had left my flivver at their place to have some adjustment or other made. I had had an argument or two with the management over the replacement of small parts, and I had developed a bit of a grouch over the matter. I had given the car considerable advertising—had had myself photographed with my wife and kids distributed all over the machine, and an enlargement of the picture was even then hanging in the store window—and I thought they ought to treat me a little more liberally.

When I went up to the Ford studio after the show that evening, my car was parked at the curb in front. It was a frosty night, and when I tried to start the engine, it balked. I cranked and cranked, meanwhile muttering comments on the car and my luck in general, until my breath began to give out.

Finally, a stranger who, with his wife, had stopped to look at the picture of myself and family in the window, came out to the curb and said in a kindly way, "You seem to be having trouble." He was rather tall and lank—looked like a working man with his Sunday clothes on, I thought.

"Trouble is no name for it," I replied. "I believe the dashed thing's quit for good."

"Let me try it," said he. He stepped down off the curb, took hold of the crank, gave it one quick, expert twitch, and the motor started humming merrily.

"You certainly must have played a trick on that engine," said I, amazed.

"They know better than to fool with me," he retorted. "My name is Henry Ford."

There was a dry grin on his thin, shrewd, yet rather gentle-looking face. I gazed at him and his wife with much interest. She was just a plain, motherly looking American housewife, simply dressed.

"I know you, too," said he, pointing a lean forefinger. "Your picture's there in the window."

"Yes," said I, "and I've got a grievance, Mr. Ford. I've given your car about ten thousand dollars' worth of free advertising, and those mutts of yours in there won't even give me a nut or a screw when one shakes off on the road."

"Is that so?" said he. "I'm sorry. I'll see that you get some service."

I went home much elated and told my wife that I wouldn't be at all surprised if Henry sent me a gold-mounted car as a souvenir of the meeting and in recognition of my services.

But three weeks—nearly a month—went by, and nothing happened. Then one day two expressmen came staggering up to my front door with a whale of a box—from the Ford Company. After considerable toil with a hammer and chisel, I pried the heavy lid off, and there inside, each in a separate box or package, each ticketed with instructions as to its use and placement, was one specimen of every bolt, nut, screw, cotter pin and suspender button used in holding a Ford car together. For some time I went around telling everybody that Ford had no sense of humor, but some of my friends were of the opinion that he was a better joker than I was.

When America entered the war, our Foy vaudeville team lost one of its star performers, for Bryan, though he had not yet quite reached man's estate, entered the Navy and served through the conflict with honor. He had for some time been writing songs for our act, and his presence was sorely missed. Among other successful songs which he has written was one which lifted Gallagher and Shean out of comparative obscurity as a team of rather

discouraged vaudeville performers, put them into the Ziegfeld Follies and made them nationally famous. After that, they were never able to find another song as good; they dropped back out of prominence again, and I believe are now playing separately.

But the vaudeville team and the Foy family had another heavy loss before the Great War was over. I had built a new and more pretentious home in the more beautiful residence section of New Rochelle and there my wife and I had expected to spend our old age together. But these hopes were blasted when, after a brief illness, she died in 1918, sincerely mourned by a community where she had become very popular and had conferred many benefactions.

I carried on with the children in vaudeville for about five years longer, and then did a short season in my last play, *The Casey Girl*, in which I played the Irish father of the family and my sons and daughters handled most of the other parts. At the end of that run I retired, at the early age of sixty-seven.

XXIII

In addition to serving half a century and more on the stage, I made just one venture into another form of amusement—namely, motion pictures. Ten or eleven years ago, when the multiple reel pictures were becoming popular and the great expansion era had arrived in the cinema business, certain film companies in California proceeded to make an effort to corner all the stage stars living and either retain them in its service or put them out of the running as movie actors.

The corporation in Hollywood which secured my services was made up of three units. One of these was a comedy organization whose director-in-chief had only recently been a blacksmith by trade. This man, in common with other movie directors, regarded the custard pie as not only the most valuable of comedy props but the funniest thing in all Nature. Most of these directors had their own type of performers—unknown to fame until they saw the screen—and preferred them to stage-trained actors; and they succeeded in killing the stage star's chances on the screen by throwing

him into unfavorable contrast with certain regular cinema actors used in the same picture.

When I was about to be starred in my first picture I insisted that my children be taken in with me, and after a hard battle, I won. The story we used had a circus background setting; but no matter whether the background was a circus tent, a college campus, a Chinatown hop joint, a glue factory or the palace at Versailles, there must be a place made for the custard pie. In the course of three or four days I was hit with all the pies in stock in Los Angeles, and others had to be hastily imported from San Francisco. I found that the movie custard pie is an imitation product, and doesn't even taste good.

I did well enough in my first picture to secure for me a contract to do several more. But then there came one of those stock-jobbing twists so common in the cinema business—reorganization, realignment; and my contract, after considerable negotiation, was cancelled, though I demanded and received by way of compromise a sum which in earlier days would have been equivalent to several years' salary. I had had enough of the experience, anyhow. Being smeared from head to foot with synthetic custard was never my idea of art or humor, so I gladly took my flock of assistant fun-makers back into good old harum-scarum vaude-



MARIE COMBS, THE FOURTH MRS. FOY

ville, where the rewards, even if slightly less per week, are surer, and managerial imaginings as to what the public wants are less muddled and capricious.

Being a strong believer in the Biblical doctrine that it is not good for man to be alone, I married again, my bride this time being Miss Marie Combs. And now, at seventy-one, here I am back in harness again! I thought I had said my farewell to the stage in 1923 when I played for a short season in *That Casey Girl.* But the call of the footlights was too strong to resist. Tom Barry, a clever writer of vaudeville skits, got up a sketch for me entitled *The Fallen Star,* and when tried out with the Keith-Albee people in August, 1927, it was such a hit that I was booked for one solid year in it—which will take me from coast to coast again, over many dear, familiar scenes of bygone days.

So there I was, that August week, back in the old "Palace" on Broadway, the street of streets, the ultimate goal of every actor's ambition. "It may be only a street to some people," I say in my act, "but to some of the rest of us, it's a religion!"

In this sketch I portray an old stage doorkeeper, an ex-actor and forgotten Broadway star, who plays an advisory part in the affairs of a vaudeville dance team, a youth and a girl whose business partnership has developed into love and then is threat-

ened with shipwreck. As the clocks begin striking the small hours of the morning, the old actor falls into a soliloquy and drifts back on the wings of memory to those enchanted nights of thirty years before, when he was at the pinnacle of his success—when it was a question after the show whether to finish the evening at Shanley's, Jack's, Rector's or Billy Considine's Metropole—all places of good cheer now long since passed away. Fancying himself seated at his favorite table, the then popular idol looks about him and sees many friends, some prominent at the moment, some whose glory was yet to come—Lillian Russell, for example, then the Queen of Beauty; Georgie Cohan, a bright lad just getting a start as an actor; Al Smith, the rising young alderman from the Fourth Ward; Irvin Cobb, the best young newspaper reporter in New York—and many others now passed from the scene or in greatly changed situations.

It happened that during my week at the Palace, Tom Heath, the comedian, celebrated one day at noon not only his birthday but the fifty-fourth anniversary of his record-breaking partnership with McIntyre—and a large delegation of old-timers from two actors' homes in the vicinity of New York were present at the affair. In order to round out the day perfectly, they had seats at the Palace for the matinee, and came directly over there from

Heath's party. When my act was over, the whole crowd came trooping back to my dressing room and we had a talkfest and a "Do-you-remember" contest which lasted until long after the orchestra had played the recessional and the last of the matinee crowd had drifted out into Broadway.

"Memories!" exclaims the old star, as he shuffles towards the stage door for his last exit. "Memories! the only beautiful thing in life that no one can take away from us."

In my fifty years' connection with the stage I've seen an army of players born, live and pass away. Some who were just chipping the shell after I'd gotten well started on the road, have strutted their hour or two and vanished—many of them dead, many broken in health, some retired in comfort, others passed out for divers reasons. Maude Adams, crowning a youth of labor with an age of ease, Marguerite Clark, married to a millionaire, Jimmy Sullivan, dropping around to the bank now and then to clip a few coupons, Henry Miller dead—these are samples of those whom I saw in their theatrical swaddling clothes. And how many, many others are treading the boards yet who did their first work as callow fledglings in companies with me. Richard Bennett, Eva Tanguay and Lenore Ulric, for example (not to mention many

others less noted) all got their start by singing in the chorus of one or another of my shows.

My good old mother, who died several years ago at the age of eighty-four, finally decided that I was a real actor, with a legitimate—even if to her inconceivably trivial—method, which didn't seem to pall on the public as she had feared it would do. I hope and believe that there are some thousands of others who likewise admit my reason for being.

While I have not fulfilled my boyish ambition, yet I have no little consolation and indeed satisfaction in the knowledge that I succeeded in the line which seemed to choose me rather than be chosen by me, and that I have lightened many an hour for the careworn. I have never given the serious thinkers anything to discuss at their club meetings, but I have helped thousands to forget life's troubles for an evening—and that is something!

The buffoon may be a good citizen and may have a sober and serious purpose in life. He may even be a very sad person. I have escaped that, for though I've had my share of trouble and sorrow, I've had, I suppose, no more than my share. A rather hard and destitute youth was balanced by a middle age somewhat opulent in more ways than one. Fate held me back from success for many years; and even after I seemed to have attained it, I had some hard knocks; but a buoyant spirit

which carried me even joyously through a poverty-stricken boyhood also enabled me to surmount these later difficulties without serious wear and tear on body or soul. On the whole, life has been a pretty jolly affair. I have no complaints to make, and few regrets.

THE END

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